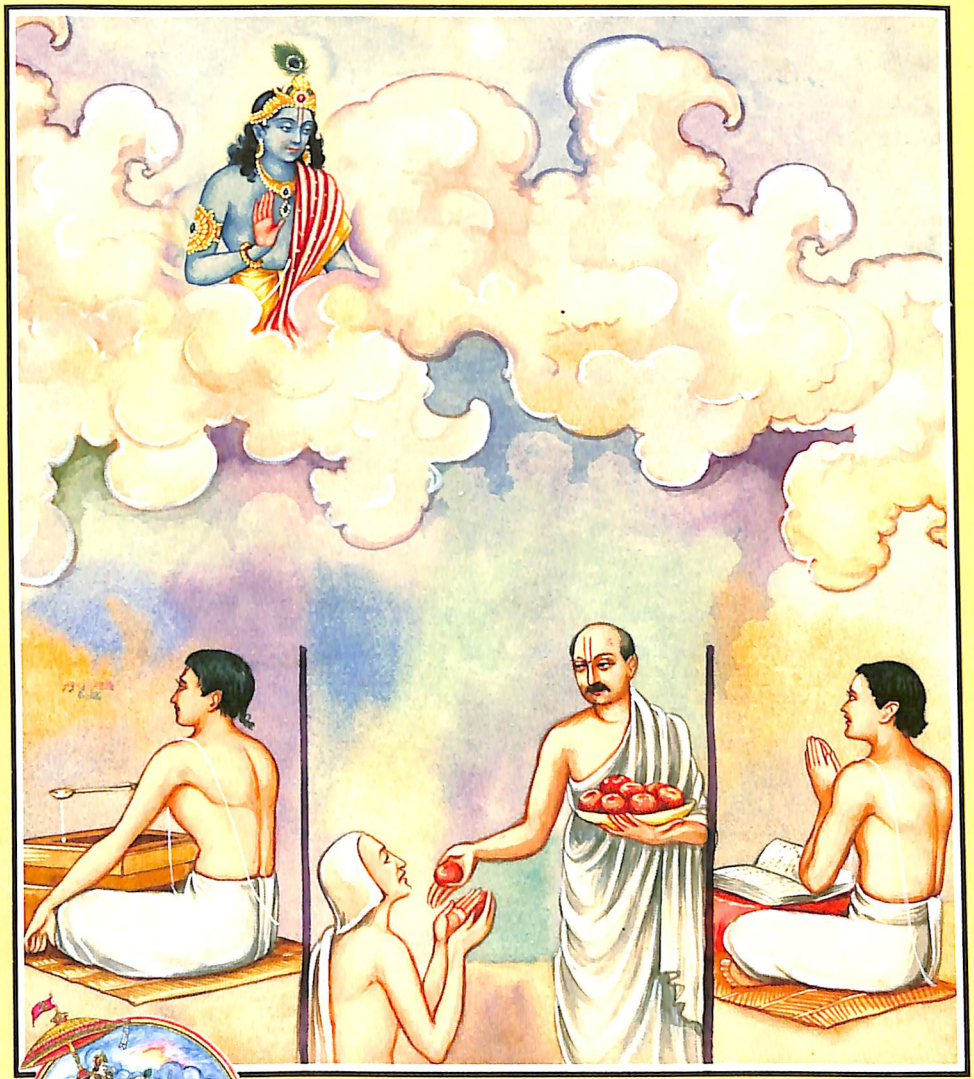
॥ Shri Hari ॥ 522▲

The Secret of Karmayoga



गीताप्रेस गोरखपुर
GITA PRESS, GORAKHPUR [SINCE 1923]

Jayadayal Goyandka

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

॥ Śrī Hari ॥

The Secret of Karmayoga

tvameva	mātā	ca	pitā	tvameva
tvameva	bandhuśca	sakhā	tvameva
tvameva	vidyā	draviṇaṁ	tvameva
tvameva	sarvaṁ	mama	devadeva

त्वमेव	माता	च	पिता	त्वमेव
त्वमेव	बन्धुश्च		सखा	त्वमेव।
त्वमेव	विद्या		द्रविणं	त्वमेव
त्वमेव	सर्वं		मम	देवदेव॥

Jayadayal Goyandka

Ninth Reprint 2008 1,000
Total 28,500

❖ **Price : Rs. 12**
(Twelve Rupees only)

ISBN 81-293-0045-1

Printed & Published by :

Gita Press, Gorakhpur—273005 (INDIA)
(a unit of Gobind Bhavan-Karyalaya, Kolkata)

Phone - (0551) 2334721; Fax - (0551) 2336997
e-mail : **booksales@gitapress.org** website : **www.gitapress.org**

[522] S.K.Y. 1 B

Publisher's Note

The Late Shri Jayadayal Goyandka an exalted and God-realized soul, needs no introduction to his readers. He is a well-known personality among saints and devotees. We feel a great pleasure in presenting his book, 'The Secret of Karmayoga' in the hands of our readers.

It is a compilation of 28 discourses of Shri Goyandka delivered from time to time in the course of his Satsanga meetings. In these discourses the main theme is that of Karmayoga even though some of them discuss social aspects also. The discourse 14,15 and 17 discuss the position and duties of women in society. It was his firm belief that the Indian culture and the way of living was for the best interests of our social life through which even God-realization could be made easier.

This book deals with every aspect of Karma, Vikarma, Akarma, Selfless Karma and disinterested Karma, in great details. It is a practical guide for those aspirants who are inclined for their spiritual disciplinig through action.

We are sure that the book will be equally useful for both aspirants and house-holders. It teaches how to perform one's duty without being entangled. We hope that our readers will receive this book with an affection and enthusiasm. The credit for the publication goes to God almighty and for the shortcomings we shoulder the responsibility.

—Publisher

॥ Śrī Hariḥ ॥

CONTENTS

1. How to Conquer Disease and Death ? 1
2. The Secret of Karma 4
3. The Duty of Man 20
4. Karmayoga—the Easier Discipline 25
5. How to Conquer Dislike ? 32
6. The Secret of Karmayoga 35
7. Methods of Mind-Control 43
8. Practices for God-Realization While Performing Action 55
9. How to Attain Blessedness Speedily ? 64
10. The Glory of Disinterestedness 75
11. Even-mindedness is Nectar and Uneven-mindedness is Poison 84
12. How to Meditate on God with Supreme Divine Attributes ? 94
13. The Three Stages of Karma 104
14. Duties of Married Women 112
15. Indian Culture and the Duties of a Woman 119
16. Some Sure and Easy Means to God-Realization 131
17. A Plea for Selflessness on the Part of Women 138
18. Disinterested Action Coupled with Devotion as a Means to God-Realization 148
19. Debtorship More Dangerous than Doneeship and Worse Even than Sin 162
20. Allotted Duty is Binding Even on Devotees and Jñānīs 167
21. Destiny versus Individual Effort 177
22. Glory of Truth 185
23. Five Types of Karmayoga 191
24. Means of Attaining Success in One's Spiritual Endeavour 200
25. God-Realization through Disinterested Action Alone 214
26. Success of Human Life 223
27. Blessedness through Reformation in Dowry System and Business 229

How to Conquer Disease and Death ?

The entire universe is but a manifestation of God and there is nothing good or bad in it. It is one's attitude towards it that determines how it will affect him. When a person falls ill, he feels uneasy mainly because he identifies himself with the body and thinks of the disease in terms of pain. To feel the pain is one thing; to be overcome by it is another. If one looks upon a disease as a penance, he can easily escape the affliction caused by it. Not only that. The disease itself, when viewed as a penance, will yield the fruit of a penance. A man who has understood this secret, will not give way to grief when he finds himself in the grip of an ailment like fever and so on. An ascetic who is practising penance has to undergo great hardships and physical tortures; but this self-mortification, instead of afflicting him, allays his grief and brings him mental peace. Similarly, an ailing person who views his ailment as a penance and strongly feels so will find that, thanks to his vivid conception, his disease, instead of causing him grief, brings him joy and peace. It is our mental attitude which determines what results we are going to achieve. One who is suffering from a disease, therefore, would do well to view his malady not only as a penance but as a divine blessing, a boon from the All-merciful Lord and as such a supreme Tapas. If one firmly begins to view his ailment as a supreme penance, the ailment will surely bring about the reward of such a penance, which cannot only allay one's sufferings in this world but can also enable him to attain the higher regions from Indra's heaven to the Abode of Brahmā. And, if such a penance is practised as a sacred duty and without attachment to its fruit, it can bestow supreme and lasting peace in the shape of final beatitude here as well as hereafter. Just as past sins are consumed by the fire of Tapas,

even so, by firmly believing that the disease from which we are suffering is a Tapa, we can be purged of all our sins and attain the Supreme status. Man shuns and abhors disease only so long as he looks upon it as a source of pain; but the moment it is turned into a penance—a means of worshipping God, he will no longer hate it nor feel afflicted by it nor condemn it. He will, on the contrary, acclaim and greet it and indifferent to all suffering, will always remain cheerful like a true ascetic. It is such a condition of one's mind that will justify his ailment being regarded as a supreme penance.

Even death, when viewed as a supreme penance, at a time when one finds himself in the throes of it, will prove a source of liberation, although the very name of death inspires terror into the minds of even learned men, not to speak of worldly-minded people who are in the grip of dying agony. Nevertheless, he whose hour of death is near and who is afflicted by some terrible disease should at least try his level best, with a view to attaining liberation, to rejoice in the thought that his dear and near ones will transfer him after his death to the woods, just as the friends and relatives of an ascetic who is retiring into the forest for practising austerities bid adieu to him; nay, he should also picture to his mind that just as an ascetic who has retired into the forest surrounds himself with five fires and bakes his body in the heat thereof, even so will his body be consigned to the funeral pyre by his kinsmen and thus undergo the highest penance.

One who thus looks upon even dying agony, which is so very painful, as a supreme penance will no longer be overcome by grief nor will he fear death. He will remain cheerful even while expiring. Just as an ascetic who is retiring into the forest for practising austerities does not feel nervous while doing so nor does he experience any pain in parting from his kith and kin, but feels a sort of joy in leaving them, and just as the fiery ordeal which he undergoes in the forest for expiating his sins and purifying his soul does not afflict his mind but gives him peace, vigour and joy, even so, one who converts death into a supreme penance is no longer afraid of it nor does the thought of

impending death afflict him. It is only then that one should be regarded as having rightly recognized death as a supreme penance.

Says the Śruti:—

एतद्वै परमं तपो यद्व्याहितस्तप्यते परमं हैव लोकं जयति य एवं वेद। एतद्वै परमं तपो यं प्रेतमरण्यं हरन्ति परमं हैव लोकं जयति य एवं वेद। एतद्वै परमं तपो यं प्रेतमग्नावभ्यादधति परमं हैव लोकं जयति य एवं वेद।

(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad V. xi. 1)

"Let a man who is suffering from some disease and is afflicted by it look upon the trouble as a supreme penance. Let him not murmur and grumble against it, nor feel oppressed by it. Such a penance on the part of the wise man who thus regards his malady as a supreme penance reduces all his actions to ashes; nay, such a recognition on his part destroys all his sins and enables him to conquer the Supreme regions, i.e., to attain liberation. Thus, one who is on the verge of death should, while dying, persuade himself to think that the removal of his body to the woods after death for funeral purposes will constitute a penance for him (for leaving one's home and retiring into the forest is proverbially regarded as a form of penance). An aspirant who believes like that is able to conquer the Supreme regions. Let him also further believe that the cremation of his body will constitute another austere penance (for, scorching one's body with fire is also proverbially recognized as a penance). An aspirant who believes like that is also able to conquer the Supreme regions or attain liberation."

In the light of the exhortation conveyed in the Śruti quoted above everyone should view disease and death as a supreme penance and thus try his level best to attain the highest status.

The Secret of Karma

A certain gentleman has asked the following question:—"If it is certain that we reap the consequences of our own actions and that our ideas are good or bad according to our past actions, are we justified in saying that man has no control over his actions and that the will of God alone is supreme ? God can in no way interfere with the fruit of our actions, why, then should we worship Him ?"

It is no doubt true that one reaps the consequences of his own actions and that his ideas, too, are moulded according to his actions. It is also true that it is the Divine will, guided by one's innate disposition (which is moulded according to one's past actions) that enables him to do a certain thing. Activity is impossible unless it is backed by the Divine presence, the Divine energy, the Divine consciousness, the Divine stimulation and the Divine guidance. It is in this sense that God is ultimately responsible for all our actions. It is also quite reasonable to believe that God, though able "to do, undo and re-do a thing" (कर्तुमकर्तुमन्यथाकर्तुम्), does not enhance or diminish the fruit of one's actions. But nevertheless it is very necessary to worship God. Before entering into a discussion of this problem it is essential to devote some thought to a number of subsidiary questions, viz., "What is Karma (action)? In what manner is the fruit of actions enjoyed? Whether man is free in the matter of enjoyment of the fruit of his actions?" and so on.

Hindu scriptures have divided Karma into three kinds: (1) Reserved (Sañcita), (2) Fruit-bearing (Prārabdha) and (3) Current (Kriyamāṇa). Let us now deal with each type separately.

(1) RESERVE STOCK

Reserved actions are those that have been performed during innumerable lives in the past and have been lying undisposed of. Whatever action one performs with his mind, speech or body is termed as 'current' so long as it is still going on, and is added to the reserved list as soon as it is finished. To take a homely illustration, a farmer has been cultivating his fields for a long time and storing

the produce thereof in a barn. In this way his barn now contains large quantities of grain of various kinds stored up for a number of years successively. As soon as the harvest is ripe, a fresh stock of grain is added to the reserve stock. Now, in this example, cultivation is an action and the barn full of grain constitutes the reserve stock. Similarly, all actions that we are performing are Kriyamāṇa (current) so long as they are not complete, and are transferred to the reserve stock accumulated in the big store-house of the heart as soon as they are finished. Out of this huge stock of accumulated actions, consisting of virtuous as well as sinful deeds, a handful is taken out to serve one lifetime and this handful of actions which has begun to bear fruit and which will be exhausted only on their fruit being enjoyed and not otherwise, is known as Prārabdha (fruit-bearing actions). In this way, so long as the reserve stock endures, a part of it continues to be taken out as Prārabdha for being enjoyed in one lifetime. A Jīva know no liberation so long as this stock of undisposed of actions performed in a number of lives is not completely exhausted. These accumulated actions supply the impulse to perform further actions; the impulse is then translated into actions; and the action, when performed, is transferred to the reserve stock and a portion of it is taken out as Prārabdha. In this way the stream of Karma is incessantly flowing and the Jīva is swept alongwith it. Our mental stuff is also moulded according to our accumulated actions; in other words, it is our accumulated actions, stored up in the heart, which induce us to perform similar actions again. The mainspring of all promptings for action, whether of a Sāttvika, Rājasika or Tāmasika nature, is our accumulated actions. Of course, it should be definitely understood that our accumulated actions simply prompt us to do a thing; they have no power to compel us to follow a certain course. Our present efforts, which are designated as Puruṣārtha, constitute the principal factor determining the course of our present actions. If the Puruṣārtha is in consonance with our accumulated actions, it lends support to the impulses induced by the latter and gets them translated into action. If, on the other hand, it is of a conflicting nature, it succeeds in restraining the

impulse. Suppose one who has the vestiges of evil actions stored up in his mind feels the impulse of thieving—misappropriating others' property. Now, if he is living in good surroundings and listens to the discourses of wise men and takes recourse to reflection also, the combined effect of all this would be that the bad impulse will receive a set-back and will soon die out. Similarly, the vestiges of virtuous actions stored up in one's mind prompt him to practise charity and perform other virtuous acts; but the unwholesome advice of his present associates, who are of an undesirable type, succeeds in curbing and eventually killing that noble impulse. The long and short of it is that one's present efforts constitute the principal factor determining the course of his actions. The noble actions that we now perform as a result of associating with holy men and entertaining noble thoughts will create noble impressions in the mind, which will throw the older impressions into the background, so that the latter will seldom manifest themselves in the form of impulses of a cognate nature.

A farmer's barn contains grain stored up for several years past and he adds the new crop also to the old stock. Now, if he wants to draw from this stock, he will naturally lay his hands upon that which has been added last of all; for the same would be readily available, having been heaped upon the previous stock. Even so the impulses for our present actions are supplied by the impressions left on our mind by our latest actions. The human mind is a repository of innumerable ideas. Out of these one would recall only those ideas more frequently which occupy his mind for the most part at the present time. Suppose A is given to the service of holy men; but, having fallen in bad company, he begins to visit theatrical performances, so that he now mostly recalls the scenes of these performances. Man generally acts according to his impulses, unless he engages in pursuits of a contrary nature; the impressions that are left on his mind by his actions are also of a similar nature and give rise to similar impulses, which in their turn lead to similar actions again. The man who frequently visits theatrical performances naturally recalls the scenes of those performances and feels inclined to enjoy them again and again.

Having secured a company favourable to his inclinations, he visits the performance again, recalls its scenes later and feels inclined to repeat the experience and actually does so again. Repeating this process several times he eventually gives up the noble pursuit of serving holy men and in course of time forgets all about it. This proves that the impressions created on our mind by our present efforts in the direction of associating with holy men, listening to the discourses of wise men and entertaining noble thoughts, and so on, curb the impulses induced by our past actions and hence it is said that man is ordinarily free in the matter of gathering a new type of impressions (सञ्चित), modifying the old ones and multiplying or diminishing them.

We owe some of our impulses to our Prārabdha Karmas as well. Although it is very difficult to single out the impulses born of our Sañcita Karmas from those induced by our Prārabdha Karmas, it should ordinarily be borne in mind that the impluses or latent desires which induce us to perform a virtuous or sinful act are traceable to our Sañcita Karmas, while those which make for the enjoyment of pleasure or pain only are due to our Prārabdha Karmas. Pleasures and pains resulting from this latter type of impulses may either be mentally experienced by our subtle body (Sūkṣma Śarīra) or they may accrue to us as a direct result of our bodily actions. In any case, man has no control over the inclinations arising out of his Prārabdha Karmas.

2. PRĀRABDHA KARMAS

It has been pointed out above that a portion of our Sañcita Karmas, which are of a mixed type—virtuous as well as sinful—is set apart as Prārabdha for being enjoyed in one Life. The fruit of these Karmas is enjoyed in two ways: (1) through mental Vāsanās and (2) through bodily actions. The pleasure or pain that we derive from the various thought-currents arising in our mind in dreams and on other occasions in our waking life constitutes what they call mental enjoyment. Suppose a merchant purchases some grain and builds hopes of buying a plot of land and constructing a house thereon provided he is able to make so much profit out of this

transaction. He also pictures to his mind a number of hopeful factors and the very thought fills him with delight. The very next moment, however, the thought of prices going down and launching him into a loss makes him uneasy and chills his spirits. Our mind is constantly swayed by such ups and downs created by our own imagination, which make us happy or otherwise. Suppose one enjoys all amenities of life and there is no ostensible reason to make him unhappy, but worries of various kinds prey upon his mind and make his life miserable. People wonder why such a darling of fortune should appear so dejected and depressed. Likewise those who suffer from wants of various kinds and have every reason to feel unhappy are sometimes seen as happy as anything. A ray of hope or the prospect of some future gain brightens for a moment the face of even one who is bewailing the death of his beloved son. This is another instance of mentally enjoying the fruit of one's Prārabdha.

We also enjoy Prārabdha Karmas by coming across things and events which affect us agreeably or otherwise and thus cause pleasure or pain to us. This enjoyment of pleasure and pain as a result of Prārabdha Karmas comes into operation in three ways—and they are technically known as (1) Anicchā Prārabdha (Prārabdha enjoyed involuntarily), (2) Parecchā Prārabdha (that enjoyed through other's will) and (3) Svecchā Prārabdha (Prārabdha enjoyed through one's own will).

ANICCHĀ PRĀRABDHA

Anicchā Prārabdha is that enjoyment of pleasure or pain which comes to us accidentally and of its own accord without any volition on our part. For instance, suppose one is going to a certain place and, while he is passing underneath a wall, the wall suddenly collapses and the man is buried under the debris; or he is struck by lightening on the way or a tree gets uprooted all of a sudden and fells him down alongwith it; or again, the roof of a house falls down and crushes him; or, while he is holding a loaded gun in his hands, the gun suddenly goes off and he is shot thereby. Similarly, on the other hand he may stumble on a precious stone while going on a journey or may discover a treasure-trove while ploughing a field or meet with

some other piece of good luck which neither he nor anyone else sought for. These are some instances of Anicchā Prārabdha.

PARECCHĀ PRĀRABDHA

Enjoyments and sufferings which we get through other's will are classed under Parecchā Prārabdha. One's being assaulted by thieves and robbers while asleep or deliberately persecuted by anyone else is an instance of the latter type, whereas the thwarting of one's evil plans by some virtuous man, one's being prevented by a friend or one's doctor from taking unwholesome or prohibited food, getting money unsolicited from some one else—these are instances of the former type. In this connection one thing should be clearly understood. Suppose someone inflicts an injury on another or commits a burglary in his house. In this case the injury that the latter receives or the theft that is committed in his house is no doubt a result of his Prārabdha Karmas, but the man who has inflicted the injury or committed the theft has perpetrated a fresh action, the consequences of which he will have to suffer hereafter.For the medium of enjoying the fruits of one's actions is not determined beforehand. If the medium or instrument is determined beforehand and if it is previously decided as to what particular person will commit theft in the house of such and such a man or inflict injury on the person of such and such a man, the person who commits the theft or inflicts the injury will escape all blame; for he has done so under the divine dispensation. Had this been so, why should it have been necessary for the Śāstras to prescribe punishments for such deeds and why should there have been any provision for retribution ?

Hence it will have to be admitted that the medium of enjoying the fruits of actions is not previously determined in all cases. An action which involves an injustice or has some selfish motive behind it, and which is characterized by attachment, is no doubt a fresh action. Of course, if God wants to utilize the services of some one in particular for disposing of a particular individual, He can do so in the same way as a ruler appoints a dutiful executioner to hang an assassin who has been sentenced to death. It may be that the man who is sent to gallows killed the executioner in a previous life

or he has had no relation whatsoever with him and may only be performing a righteous act.

SVECCHĀ PRĀRABDHA

Deriving pleasure from coition with one's wife during the period prescribed for the same, begetting a son or having no issue, losing one's child, taking pains and bearing hardships in prosecuting a righteous business, deriving profit from the same or incurring loss therein or losing the profits once gained—these constitute instances of Svecchā Prārabdha. The urge that we feel for performing these actions emanates from our Prārabdha Karmas and the impulse is followed by action. Success or failure in our undertakings depends on the merits or demerits accruing from our past actions.

It is no doubt very difficult to trace the causes of pleasures and pains that we experience as a result of our Prārabdha Karmas. Even by recourse to a minute analysis and reasoning of various kinds it is extremely difficult to say definitely what particular action performed in a previous life is responsible for a particular pleasure or pain experienced by us now or whether a particular action committed in this very life has been transferred from the Sañcita to the Prārabdha list and has brought about this experience.

Suppose some one performs the Putreṣṭi sacrifice (a sacrifice for obtaining a male issue) or some other sacrifice for acquiring wealth and obtains a son or wealth immediately after the sacrifice is over. Now it is difficult to decide whether the sacrifice he has just performed or some other action performed by him in a previous life is responsible for his obtaining the son or wealth. It is just possible that he may have obtained the son or riches as a reward for some meritorious deed performed by him in a previous life and the fruit of the sacrifice now performed may accrue to him later on, or it may be that some defect in the performance of the sacrifice may have nullified its effect. Suppose a patient undergoes treatment for curing his ailment and is cured. Here it is difficult to judge whether the cure has been brought about by the treatment or whether the period of Bhoga (suffering) being over, the cure has come of its own accord and it appears by coincidence that it has

been brought about by the treatment.* Nevertheless it must be understood that, whatever may be the case, every event or experience affecting us agreeably or otherwise is a result of actions performed of our own free will. There are no hard and fast rules to determine whether the fruit of a particular action will accrue immediately or at some future date. The whole thing entirely lies in the hands of God, a Jīva being altogether helpless in the matter. Those who commit sins in this life are found happy and prosperous with a number of sons and plenty of wealth and honour (although many of them might be suffering from some mental worries and afflictions the magnitude of which cannot be imagined by us), whereas those who lead a virtuous life are seen suffering from want (though many of them might likewise be mentally happy), which leads us to doubt whether there is any such thing as retribution in Divine dispensation. In such cases it should be understood that they will reap the fruit of their present actions in a future life and that they are at present enjoying what they earned in a previous life.

It is said that the fruit of an action which is very powerful accrues forthwith, while that of ordinary actions accrues rather late. But even this rule does not appear to hold good in every case; hence it must be said that we human beings cannot trace the cause of a particular pleasure or pain experienced by us of our own free will, on the strength of reasoning and logic. Besides God, Who is the controller of the whole universe and has knowledge of the past, present and future, only Yogīs who can focus their mind on their actions and their fruit can know something by grace of God through their Yogic powers.

3. CURRENT ACTIONS

Fresh actions, whether good or bad, that are performed of one's

* A malady results from a sinful act committed in a previous life as well as from indiscretion in diet, etc., in this life. A disease resulting from the latter cause is generally cured by treatment; but an ailment resulting from past actions cannot be cured so long as the period of their enjoyment has not expired; but it is very difficult to determine as to what particular malady is a result of past actions and which one has resulted from indiscretion. Hence treatment should be resorted to in every case.

own free will are known as Kriyamāṇa or current actions. The principal factor determining our present actions is our Sañcita Karmas; in some cases one's own Prārabdha or that of anyone else, determines the course of our actions. Man, though bound by Divine laws, is ordinarily free in performing fresh actions. It lies in his power to obey or not to obey the divine laws. That is why he has to reap the consequences of his actions.

If some one says that the Divine will or his own Prārabdha is responsible for the good or bad actions that emanate from him, he is labouring under a delusion. The belief that God or Prārabdha is responsible for our actions is open to four principal objections, which cannot be admitted in the case of God Who is free from faults (निर्विकार), desireless (निरपेक्ष), impartial (समदर्शी), compassionate, just and disinterested. They are as follows:—

(1) If it is God or Prārabdha that is responsible for our good or evil actions, scriptures containing injunctions and prohibitions become unnecessary. Those who disobey the injunctions of the Śāstras such as "Speak the truth" ('सत्यं वद'), "Practise virtue" ('धर्मं चर')—*vide Taittirīya Upaniṣad* I. xi. 1— "Be devoted to thy mother" ('मातृदेवो भव'), "Be devoted to thy father" ('पितृदेवो भव'), "Be devoted to thy preceptor" ('आचार्यदेवो भव')—*vide Taittirīya Upaniṣad* I.xi.2 and "One should not drink wine" ('सुरां न पिबेत्'), "One should not violate the marriage-bed of another's wife" ('परदारान्नाभिगच्छेत्'), who lead a licentious life and are steeped in sin can conveniently say that they are doing so at the prompting of God, who is the controller of his Prārabdha. In this way God is exposed to the charge of demolishing the Śāstras.

(2) When it is God Who impels us to perform all actions, why should we reap their consequences in the shape of pleasure and pain ? God Himself, who performs all actions, should accept the consequences thereof. Since He does not do so, He stands guilty of visiting His own faults on others.

(3) Such a belief detracts from the fairness and kindness of God, for no administrator of justice can ever compel us to commit sins again as a punishment for past sins. If He makes it obligatory on us to commit sins in this way it would be unjust of Him to provide

punishment for sinners. If it is God Himself Who makes us commit sins—becomes instrumental in the commission of sins—in the first instance, and then punishes us, He exposes Himself not only to the charge of injustice but to that of ruthlessness as well.

(4) If it is God Himself Who makes it obligatory on a sinner to commit sins again, it leaves no scope for a Jīva to rid himself of sins. If sin follows sin and the process continues, a Jīva will be compelled to wallow in sins for all time to come, which will lead in the first place to the fault known as *Regressus ad infinitum* and, secondly, will expose God to the charge of keeping the soul in the bondage of sins for ever.

Hence it is not reasonable to believe that it is God who makes us perform virtuous or sinful acts. In any case He never urges us to commit sins. Of course, He has enjoined us to perform virtuous acts, although He has left it entirely open to us to obey His injunctions or to transgress them. A Government officer, for instance, is entrusted with the duty of protecting the person and property of the people of his jurisdiction according to the laws of the land; but he is free to turn his authority to good account or abuse it, although he is bound by laws and is also liable to be punished in the event of violating them. Similarly man is free to perform actions.

God ordinarily always urges us to tread the path of righteousness and helps the Jīva to attain salvation. Constantly dwelling on the objects of worldly enjoyment is mainly responsible for our committing sins. This, again, gives rise to Kāma (desire), which is an effect of the Rajas element and this Kāma leads to other vices such as anger, etc., which lead the soul to perdition. The Lord says:—

"Man, musing on the objects of sense, conceiveth an attachment to these; from attachment ariseth desire; from desire anger (Krodha) cometh forth.

"From anger proceedeth delusion; from delusion, confused memory; from confused memory, the destruction of Reason

(Buddhi); from destruction of Reason he perisheth."*

Thus it is proved that attachment born of constantly dwelling on objects of sense, not God or our past actions (प्रारब्ध), is mainly responsible for sinful acts. Our actions are preceded by thoughts or impulses which conform to the impressions of our latest actions accumulated on the plate of our mind. Hence it is necessary to perform virtuous acts in order to avoid sins. By performing virtuous deeds we shall be gathering good impressions in our mind and entertain good ideas, and these latter will help us a good deal in performing virtuous actions and abstaining from evil deeds hereafter. That is why in reply to the following question of Arjuna the Lord asks him to kill the devil of desire, which is the root of sin and is born of the Rajas element which consists of attachment. The question of Arjuna runs as follows:—

"But dragged on by what does a man commit sin, reluctantly indeed, O descendant of Vṛṣṇi, as it were by force constrained !"†

In reply to this question the Lord says: "It is desire, it is wrath, begotten by the quality of motion (Rajas), all-consuming, all-polluting; know thou this as the foe here on earth "‡

Further on the Lord calls this desire an insatiable flame and points out that it clouds wisdom in the same way as smoke clouds a flame or as dust soils a mirror or as the amnion wraps the embryo. This desire, He continues, resides in the senses, the mind, and the intellect, and the Lord enjoins Arjuna, to slay this devil of desirse, which cuts at the very root of Knowledge and

---

* ध्यायतो विषयान्पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।
सङ्गात्संजायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥
क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥ (*Gītā* II. 62-63)

† अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।
अनिच्छन्नपि वार्ष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः ॥ (*Gītā* III. 36)

‡ काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥ (*Gītā* III. 37)

wisdom, by mastering the senses. Had the Jīva not been powerful enough to conquer desire, the Lord could not have urged Arjuna to do that. Hence our Kriyamāṇa Karmas are purified by performing noble deeds and associating with noble men as enjoined by the Lord. It is our current actions that form the basis of our Sañcita and Prārabdha Karmas. Hence one should try to perform noble deeds in the present, as it is in the performance of these actions alone that he is free.

CAN KARMAS BE EXHAUSTED WITHOUT ENJOYMENT ?

Now it is necessary to understand whether all these three types of Karmas can be exhausted by enjoyment alone or if there is any other means also of destroying them ? Out of these, Prārabdha Karmas are exhausted by enjoyment alone. Just as the words of a reliable personage do not go in vain, even so Prārabdha Karmas cannot be exhausted without enjoyment. Enjoyment can be brought about without any desire, through others' desire or through one's own desire, as mentioned above, or it can be had recourse to even as an expiation for one's evil deeds. Release can be obtained both through service and undergoing punishment. Our Sañcita and Kriyamāṇa Karmas can be destroyed through virtuous acts like sacrifice, charity, askesis, service, etc., performed in a disinterested spirit, and through worship of God consisting of items such as control of breath (Prāṇāyāma), hearing (श्रवण), reflection or intellection (मनन) and meditation (निदिध्यासन) including intercourse with holy men, Bhajana (remembrance of God) and contemplation (Dhyāna). These practices give rise to saving knowledge (Jñāna) through purity of heart, whereby the whole stock of Sañcita Karmas is burnt as a stack of hay.* And, having no selfish interest now, he can have no desire for any worldly object whatsoever nor does he retain any attachment for action or the ego-sense and hence he is incapable of performing interested actions.

---

* यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात्कुरुतेऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा ॥
(*Gītā* IV. 37)

It is very easy to secure freedom from the bondage of meritorious deeds; they can be easily got rid of by being consecrated to God. Suppose a usurer has advanced some money on loan to someone and the latter owes the amount to him. The usurer can get rid of this sense of creditorship by mentally renouncing it. He is rid of this sense by merely waiving the claim in his mind; but the man who owes the amount cannot be freed from the liability by simply denying the obligation. Similarly, we cannot escape the consequences of our sins by simply pleading unwillingness to suffer the same. In order to get rid of those sins we have either to reap the consequences or perform disinterested actions or disinterested worship, etc.

Sins and virtuous acts performed by the same individual are not mutually accounted for. The former are not set aside by the latter, nor the latter by the former; they have to be enjoyed severally. Suppose A owed some money to B and did not repay it. One day, therefore, B out of anger gave two Lāṭhī blows to A. Thereupon A lodged a complaint against B before the Magistrate. B in defence confessed that he had no doubt dealt A a couple of blows, but added that A owed him one thousand rupees and demanded that a suitable amount might be deducted from the said sum in recompense for the crime and the complainant made to pay the balance. The Magistrate laughed at this reply and said that he should file a civil suit separately for recovery of the debt and, if he failed to realize the amount, he should have him sent to jail in default; but he must take the consequences of taking the law in his own hands and cudgelling the complainant. Even so we have to reap the consequences of our sinful and virtuous acts separately. Meritorious acts performed with some desire are not taken account of while dealing with sins and vice-versa.

WHO AWARDS THE FRUIT OF OUR ACTIONS ?

Some people believe that our virtuous and sinful deeds bring their own results according to their respective merits, and that there is no controlling agency like God nor is there any need of God. This, however, is an erroneous belief. Such a belief presents numerous difficulties and is not corroborated by reason. Without a controlling agency to distinguish between good and evil actions

and award the fruit thereof accordingly, enjoyment of the fruit of actions is not possible. For the actions themselves, inconscient as they are, cannot be believed to have the controlling power; they are mere causes. As regards the sinner himself, he would not be prepared to suffer the painful consequences of his sinful deeds of his own accord; this is admitted on all hands and is a well-known fact. Suppose someone commits a burglary or dacoity. Now the crime of theft or dacoity, being inconscient, cannot provide punishment for the criminal, whereas the criminal himself does not court punishment. That is why some ruler or administrator is required to award punishments. Even so a controlling or regulating agency in the person of God is required for regulating, differentiating and awarding the fruit of actions. This should not lead one to think that there is affinity between a king and God. A king who neither resides in the hearts of all nor is disinterested and is not free from selfishness nor from error can even give a wrong decision under the influence of error, partiality, ignorance or selfishness. God, however, Who is impartial, benevolent, disinterested, compassionate and just, and Who is the inner controller of all, is not open to error. Whereas a king administers justice from a selfish motive, God does so out of mercy and with the motive of doing good to the Jīvas. It may be asked here as to why God takes all this trouble if he has no selfish interest to serve. Our reply to this is that God does not find this work irksome or boring. Just as a benevolent person settles others' disputes in an impartial way without seeking honour, praise or respect and thus compels the admiration of all, even so God dispenses justice to all the Jīvas for their good and in an unselfish way due to His benevolent nature.

If God is not recognized as a controlling agency, the enjoyment of fruits of actions would not be possible. One more argument is worth considering in this connection. Suppose one has perpetrated such horrible sins as entitle him to be born as a dog in the next life. His actions, which are inconscient, cannot take him to the womb of a bitch, (for conveyances such as a chariot, a motorcar and so on, which are inconscient, cannot carry the rider to his destination of their own accord without the guidance of an intelligent driver) and the sinner

himself would not like to have himself transferred to the womb of a dog for reaping the fruit of his sins. He cannot do so even if he wishes to, for he does not possess the requisite means. We cannot take ourselves to an unknown destination even in our conscious state; under such circumstances, it is altogether impossible to shift from one species to another without discriminating intelligence.

If it is urged that the veil shrouding our wisdom is lifted at that time, even that does not stand to reason; for at the time of death one generally finds himself in bewildered state owing to excess of pain and infatuation. His condition is quite unlike that of a Yogī or an enlightened man. With ordinary worldly knowledge it is neither possible for an individual to enter a particular womb nor would anyone like to do so, as life in the uterus is very miserable. Thus it is proved that a controlling authority, who is at the same time the Lord of this universe, is required for providing enjoyment of the fruits of actions according to their respective merits. And such a controlling authority in the person of God surely exists.

WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO REMEMBER GOD ?

Now, supposing that God invariably awards the fruit of our actions according as they are good or bad, and if He cannot reduce or enhance it, why should we remember Him ? Let us now consider this question. In the first place, remembrance of God is a principal item of worship (Upāsanā); is a very noble act and a royal road to spiritual advancement; nay, it tops all spiritual practices. By practising this we feel the urge for it more and more and the result is that we actually remember God more and more so that our mind gets purified and the supreme light of divine wisdom begins to be reflected thereon. This fire of wisdom burns away the stock of Sañcita Karmas and thus destroys the seed of rebirth. That is why worship of God is supremely necessary.

The next reason why we should worship God is that this constitutes the paramount duty of our life. People serve their parents as a matter of duty. Naturally, therefore, it is our foremost and paramount duty to remember Him Who is the supreme Father of all parents, Who is extremely benevolent, Who has afforded us all sorts of facilities, Who constantly showers His motiveless

blessings on us, Whose commandments and injunctions are conducive of our lasting good, Who is the beacon-light of our life, Who acts as a guide to those who have lost their vision and is the support of the drowning and the pole-star for the crew who have lost their way in this vast ocean of Saṁsāra.

It is sheer ungratefulness on our part not to remember God. When we cannot repay the obligations of even our parents and teachers, much less can we repay the obligations of God, Who is our best friend. Such being the case, it is sheer ungratefulness—the meanest of all mean acts—to forget Him.

God can do anything and everything. He is able to do, undo and re-do a thing (कर्तुमकर्तुमन्यथाकर्तुम्), but He does not do so; He respects His own laws and we should surely not make use of His remembrance for the condonation of our sins and for having our good actions rewarded. Sins are destroyed as a matter of course as a result of remembering Him, just as darkness disappears even before sunrise. Saint Kabīra has said:—

"Our sins are destroyed the moment we remember the Divine Name, just as a spark of fire is enough to burn away a whole stack of old hay."*

But a worshipper of God should not expect that His remembrance will destroy his sins. One who understands the true nature of God, does not make use of His remembrance for the destruction of his sins. One who knows that the remembrance of God cuts at the root of transmigration (Saṁsāra) itself, which is a mere illusion, can never utilize it for averting trifling worldly troubles. If he does so, he surely commits a great blunder. It is something quite undignified like requesting a royal friend to exempt one from a duty of Rs. 10/- only. Hence remembrance of God should not be utilized for any worldly object whatsoever, but it should be practised at all times as a duty. For remembrance of God is conducive of good and good alone in every case.

* जबहिं नाम हिरदै धर्‌यो, भयो पापको नास।
जैसे चिनगी आगकी, परी पुराने घास॥

The Duty of Man

A careful study of the modern mind will make it evident that in the present age people in general, are in a way opposed to spiritual development. Such men are really few and far between who are in earnest about Self-Realization. Even of those few people who strive for it, a large majority know not how to proceed on. Want of faith and devotion has made even real guides rare. Thanks to the times and environment in which we are living and the peculiarity of our nature, some of us are not able to translate our ideas into action in spite of our desire to practise self-discipline. The main cause responsible for this is ignorance combined with absence of faith in God, the scriptures and the great sages of yore. But nobody can make a gift of this faith or Śraddhā. Association with those possessing this Śraddhā, and austerity, sacrifice, charity and worship of God, practised in a disinterested spirit, are some of the means of purifying the heart, and it is only the pure in heart that are blessed with faith in scriptures and life after death and love for God and God-inspired men. A man is what his Śraddhā is. In this life as well as the next Śraddhā is his only support. The *Gītā* says:—

सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः॥

(XVII. 3)

"The faith of each is shaped to the constitution of his mind, O descendant of Bharata. The man consists of his faith; that which his faith is, he is even that." Therefore one should try to acquire true faith.

In whatever name or form of God you repose your faith, you will undoubtedly be considered to have faith in Him; for all names and forms are His. You may repose faith in and follow any religion which appeals to you, any Ṛṣi, Mahātmā or God-inspired

man who is worthy of credence to you. All that is needed is Śraddhā or faith. God, religion and life after death, etc., are things which can only be believed for the main part. It is after repeated efforts and hard unceasing struggle that one obtains a direct perception of these truths. For the realization of these higher truths one cannot do without reposing faith in someone, at least, in the beginning. If one does not do so, he is sure to turn an atheist and deviate from the path of blessedness. Nay, he will never enter the path of God-Realization and will go down in the scale of evolution.

If you do not believe in any particular religion, scripture or the utterances of saints and sages of old, you should certainly believe at least in the teachings of *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*. For the teachings of the *Gītā* are in harmony with the teachings of almost all the different religions of the world.

If you do not believe even in the *Gītā*, you should repose faith in God according as you have conceived of Him and, surrendering yourself to Him, apply yourself in right earnest to the work of Self-Realization. Supposing you doubt even the existence of God, you should select the best man of the age and arm yourself with sufficient courage to follow in his footsteps.

If you cannot repose faith in any saint or great man of the present age, you should pause to consider whether there is no one superior to you in the whole world so far as the knowledge of the path of blessedness is concerned. If you allege that such men do exist but you have not yet come across any such person, it is your duty to find them out; or, if you think that there are many people superior to you but people who can ably instruct you in the Law of Higher Life are few and far between and those few who exist are not easily accessible to men lacking in faith and cannot be recognized even if we happen to meet such persons, having not, the eyes wherewith to recognize them, it is essential for you to consider whether the sort of life you are leading is conducive to your true well-being. If you are satisfied with what you are doing, you should at least exert yourself more and more for your advancement day by day. You should cultivate virtues like

serenity, self-control, fortitude, forgiveness, composure of mind contentment, truthfulness and compassion, practise Japa, austerity, meditation and service, and give up vices like sloth, mendacity, sensuality, duplicity, thieving and adultery. Before undertaking any work one should carefully consider whether what he is going to do is really conducive of good to him and correct at once whatever defect appears to him therein. Human birth is a rare gift. Even lacs of rupees cannot prolong one's life even by a minute. Such a valuable life should never be wasted in sleep, lethargy, idle pursuits and indolence. Anyone who passes his time listlessly is bound to come to grief. A Hindi poet has beautifully said:—

"One who takes up any work without due consideration of its pros and cons surely comes to grief. Not only does he spoil the work and become an object of laughter in the eyes of the world, but he loses his peace of mind, and the pleasures of the world lose all charm for him. Giradhara, the poet, says that the laws of Karma are inexorable. A work done without due consideration pricks the heart like a spike."

One should, therefore, take particular care to employ his time to the best advantage according to his discretion, so that he may not have to repent afterwards. One has to pay a very high price for obtaining human birth. One has to do so many things in the course of one single life, which is very short. Hence one should wake up and be wise enough to devote the rest of his life to works conducive to our highest good.

If one does not engage according to his light and knowledge in works which are beneficial to him here as well as hereafter, it will be nothing short of a height of folly, indolence and sloth on his part. He who does not withdraw his mind from idle pursuits, lethargy and enjoyment of sense-objects and put it on the right track and proceed along the downward path, is his own enemy. The Śruti says:—

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः ।
भूतेषु भूतेषु विचित्य धीराः प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकादमृता भवन्ति ॥

(*Kenopaniṣad* II.5)

"It is well and good if one realizes Him in this very life: if, on the contrary, one fails to know Him in this life, he will be a greater loser. Men of strong determination who seek for the Lord in every creature attain immortality on casting off this body."

One has to tread this path of self-evolution by himself; no one else can do it for him. Therefore, the only wise thing for him is that he should be vigilant every moment of his life and exercising self-control, should devote himself whole-heartedly to practices which insure his permanent good here as well as hereafter. Idle pursuits, lethargy, enjoyment of sense-objects and immoral practices ought to be given up as the greatest stumbling-blocks on this path. Śruti exhorts as follows:—

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।
क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया
दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥

(*Kaṭhopaniṣad* I. III. 14)

"Arise, awake and, approaching great souls, receive instruction from them. The wise say that the road is difficult to tread; it is like treading on the sharp edge of a razor."

But, because the road is very difficult, one should not lose heart. By fixing one's mind on God, one can easily surmount all difficulties through His grace—

'मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि ।'

The Lord further says:—

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।
मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥

(*Gītā* VII. 14)

"This divine Māyā (Illusion) of Mine, consisting of the three Guṇas, is difficult to pierce; those who devote themselves to Me alone, they cross over this illusion."

To visualize the Lord at all places and in all things, constant unfailing remembrance of God and acting according to His commandments constitutes self-surrender to God. This is also called one-pointed and exclusive devotion (अनन्य भक्ति) to the Lord.

Therefore to take refuge in God is the foremost duty of all those who believe in God. One who completely surrenders himself to Him can never perpetrate anything which is opposed to the will of the Lord. He attains a state which is beyond all fear; he is completely rid of grief and infatuation. He enjoys everlasting peace which nothing can disturb and his bliss knows no bounds. This ineffable mood of his cannot be understood or explained to others through example, words or signs. When even those who have attained such a state are unable to describe it, how can others do it? Mind and speech have no access there. It can only be experienced through one's purified intellect. This is what the Vedas and the Śāstras say:—

एष सर्वेषु भूतेषु गूढोत्मा न प्रकाशते।
दृश्यते त्वग्र्यया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः॥

(*Kaṭhopaniṣad* I.III.12)

"Concealed in all beings, this Ātmā does not manifest itself. It can only be perceived, through the pointed and subtle intellect, by men of subtle sight."

The Lord Himself says:—

सुखमात्यन्तिकं यत्तद्बुद्धिग्राह्यमतीन्द्रियम्।
वेत्ति यत्र न चैवायं स्थितश्चलति तत्त्वतः॥

(*Gītā* VI.21)

"That in which he findeth supreme delight, which the intellect can grasp and which is beyond the senses; wherein established, he is not shaken even by heavy sorrow."

Every human being should endeavour to attain this state: it is the paramount duty of all.

Karmayoga—the Easier Discipline

Some friends have expressed the following doubts in regard to the path of Karma being easier than that of Jñāna.

In the *Gītā* the Lord has highly praised the discipline of Karmayoga and declared it to be easier than the discipline of Jñānayoga. Nay, he has gone to the length of saying that it is difficult to succeed in the practice of Jñānayoga without the practice of Karmayoga. But how Karmayoga is easier of the two disciplines is not clear. In the present age not many Karmayogīs are found who can satisfy the test of the *Gītā,* nor is their actual practice of Karmayoga in daily conduct present before us. For Karmayoga consists in the renunciation of both the fruit of Karma and attachment for Karma. But there is none we know of who can explain and illustrate by his own example how Karma may be performed without reference to its fruit and without attachment to it and whose conduct may be accepted as ideal for guiding us along the path of Karmayoga. Therefore, we want to know the real fact. The Karmayoga as enunciated in the *Gītā* and which has been declared to be the easier discipline appear very difficult to us. Is this Karmayoga a mere theoretical proposition, or can be actually reduced to practice ? If it is a discipline which can be reduced to practice there must be people who know and practise it. How can it be called easier if there are none who know and practise the discipline ?

The subject of Jñānayoga is very abstruse, hard and subtle; it is difficult for the ordinary man even to understand it, much more to reduce it into practice. That is why Karmayoga has been declared as the easier of the two disciplines. Moreover the practice of Jñānayoga as an independent discipline is extremely difficult. For so long as the heart is impure one remains tied to the

body and the practice of Jñānayoga for one tied to the body is as good as impossible. A Sādhaka attains the qualification for the practice of Jñānayoga only when his heart has become pure through the practice of Karmayoga, which consists in the renunciation of attachment and self-interest. Karmayoga, however, does not require any such condition. The practice of Karmayoga may be started even when there is identification of the self with the body, and the heart is impure. The intellect when purified through its practice becomes one-pointed and filled with God-consciousness. God-Realization is possible through such intellect. This is how Karmayoga is easier, and here lies its speciality. It is in view of this fact that the Lord declared Karmayoga to be the superior discipline in the *Gītā* (Chapter V. 2).

The Lord has declared Karmayoga to consist in the renunciation of both attachment for and the fruit of Karma (II.48; XVIII. 9); in some places He has characterized Karmayoga as the renunciation of attachment for all Karmas and all objects (VI.4); while in others He has defined Karmayoga as the renunciation of the fruit of all Karmas (XVIII.11) or as the absence of craving for the fruit of Karmas (VI.1). So far as the doctrine of Karmayoga is concerned, there is no fundamental difference among these three definitions. Karmayoga consists in the renunciation of both the fruit of Karma and attachment to the Karma itself, hence it was quite in order to mention both these forms of renunciation while defining Karmayoga. Where only renunciation of attachment to Karmas and objects is mentioned there the other form of renunciation is also implied though not expressly stated. When the attraction for wealth, woman, body, honour and fame is renounced, the quest for them, i.e., the fruit of action is automatically relinquished. For attachment is the root from which arises the desire for the fruit of Karma. With the renunciation of the cause the effect is automatically renounced. The renunciation of the desire of fruit being a natural corollary of the renunciation of attachment for objects it was quite reasonable to define Karmayoga as the absence of such attachment. Now, as regards Karmayoga being declared to consist in the mere renunciation of

the fruit of Karma, or the absence of craving for the same, it has to be remembered that renunciation of the fruit of action leads to the renunciation of attachment and vice-versa. That is to say, through renunciation of the one, the other is automatically renounced. By renunciation of the desire for the fruit of actions is meant the renunciation of the quest for all objects of enjoyment, belonging either to this world or to the next. It may also be termed as the denial of the self, or self-abnegation. Through practice of this virtue of self-denial the root of all evils, viz., attachment is gradually got rid of. Thus inasmuch as the renunciation of the fruit of actions automatically leads to the renunciation of attachment it was quite reasonable to define Karmayoga as the renunciation of the fruit of Karma, or the absence of craving for the fruit of Karma.

Here it may be asked: if Karmayoga means only the renunciation of the fruit of Karma, or absence of craving for the fruit of Karma, then where was the necessity for the Lord to inculcate renunciation of attachment alongwith the renunciation of the fruit of actions now and again in the *Gītā*. Our answer to this question is that Karmayoga is accomplished only when attachment itself is renounced through renunciation of the fruit of action. Again, without renouncing attachment it is not possible to perform actions in which there is complete abnegation of self. Therefore, where there is absolute denial of self, renunciation of attachment should be taken as implied. In fact, Karmayoga consists in the renunciation of both. To make this clear it was quite reasonable on the part of the Lord to say that 'Karmayoga is the renunciation of the fruit of action, as well as of attachment'

The majority of people of the present world appear to be drugged with an extra dose of worldliness. Of them a solitary figure here and there, who possesses wisdom, is seen striving for the uplift of the soul. Among these strivers, again, hardly anyone succeeds in realizing the Paramātmā. It is very difficult to come across a soul who has reached this enviable state of God-Realization. Even if we meet such a soul we cannot recognize

him for want of faith and reverence. Therefore, what wonder if we do not come across such Yogīs, or fail to notice conduct which is appropriate to them.

The Lord Himself stated in the *Gītā* (IV.2) that for a long time the practice of Karmayoga had disappeared from this world. This shows that even in His own time there were not many people who understood this Yoga, and even at the present age there are not many who understand it. People fail to understand the secret of this blessed path of Karmayoga shown by the Lord inasmuch as their heart is torn by conflicting emotions such as those of love and hatred. The secret of it is known only to those blessed souls whose sins have been washed away by performance of selfless deeds.

It cannot be said that real Mahāpuruṣas (great souls) who have realized the Paramātmā are no longer available in this world. The fact is that for want of faith and reverence we fail to meet and recognize them. Under such circumstances, when we do not find any person who can give us a practical demonstration of Karmayoga through his conduct, the only course left to those who seek the betterment of their soul is to keep before them the teachings of the Lord as their ideal and try to regulate their conduct according to the same.

The Karmayoga described in the *Gītā* is no mere theoretical proposition, but can be actually reduced into practice. It appears difficult to us only on account of our ignorance of the secret of its performance and our attachment with the body and objects of the world as also due to lack of faith on our part. But as a matter of fact it is not so difficult. Through disinterested performance of duties laid down by the Śāstras with implicit faith in the words of the Lord and according to His directions, attachment for the world will gradually disappear and the secret of Karmayoga will gradually unfold itself to us. Through this process when attachement is completely destroyed and the secret of Karmayoga is revealed to us, practice of Karmayoga will no longer appear difficult.

Real selflessness consists in renouncing the desire for all forms of fruit of Karma. Through such disinterested Karma weaknesses

like partiality and prejudice are eradicated and aberrations to which they generally lead are put a stop to. Therefore, it is the duty of every man to perform such disinterested action taking refuge under the feet of the Lord. But what this renunciation of self-interest in every Karma means should be carefully analysed and understood. Suppose we perform an action approved by the Śāstras through mind, speech or body, and do not seek woman, wealth, children or bodily comfort in return for it; but we cannot be said to have renounced all forms of self-interest thereby. All these can be renounced even for the sake of honour, prestige and fame. Therefore, we can be said to have completely renounced the self only when we have renounced the desire for honour prestige, fame and even enjoyments of the other world, nay, when we have renounced the consciousness of our having renounced all these things.

It is due to ignorance or lack of wisdom on our part that in order to serve our minor interests we neglect our greater and truer interest, viz., God-Realization. On account of this ignorance we do not realize the inestimable loss we suffer thereby. And what little faith we have in this loss is not free from doubt. For the supreme bliss and supreme peace of which we read so much in books we have never tasted. The scriptures and saints exhort us with one voice to give up the desire for honour and fame as something exceedingly harmful. They are thorns in the path of God-Realization. They retard the progress of the aspirant in his Godward journey. If coveted much they even bring about the spiritual downfall of the aspirant by leading to hypocrisy and dissimulation. When put to the test of reason, they even appear as such. Nevertheless, when honour and praise are bestowed on us they bring joy to our heart and thus we develop attachment to them which in its turn stimulates the desire to win the same. Ignorance or lack of understanding on our part is the cause of all this. Parallel is the case of a patient who through attachment and subordination to the palate takes a prohibited diet and thereby aggravates his suffering. There are some patients who even summon death through this weakness. It will appear to us on

close examination that the ignorance or perversity of the patient is responsible for his taking the wrong diet. Similarly, it is our ignorance or stupidity which is responsible for our attachment to our person, wife, children, wealth, honour, fame and the like. The patient, who reposes faith in his physician as well as on the medicines and diet prescribed by the latter and takes the medicine as well as the prescribed diet avoiding prohibited diet, gets cured. Similarly, the wise man who avoids all wrong diet in the shape of evil habits and evil practices pointed out by the scriptures and Mahāpuruṣas, takes the medicine in the form of devotion to God and adopts the correct diet in the shape of right conduct and divine virtues, gets cured of the greatest of earthly diseases in the shape of transmigration. If his stars are not propitious the ordinary patient may not be cured even by the best of medicines, but the spiritual patient who takes the medicine and diet mentioned above surely gets rid of the pangs of birth and death; adverse fate cannot stand in the way of his cure.

Before we start any work the first thought that arises in the minds of us all, is what shall we stand to gain by this. Our thoughts are naturally directed towards our own selfish interests. Therefore, this thought of self-interest should be banished the moment it arises in the mind before we start any work. That which we regard as a gain in the worldly sense is not gain in the true sense of the term. True gain is that which has a real existence and which once having gained is never lost. Such true gain is secured through renunciation of worldly gains. Therefore, thoughts of earthly and personal gain which arise at the time of starting a work should be immediately discarded knowing them to be the root of all evils.

Our devotion to our earthly interests has grown to such an extent that it does not allow us to perceive our true interests. We should, therefore, remember God at every step and pray to Him that we may ever remain conscious of our real interests and save ourselves from the lure of the destructive earthly interests.

The discipline of Karmayoga is still easier for those who have surrendered themselves to God knowing His real nature and

excellences and understanding His greatness and glory, although ordinarily man's attachment for children, wife, home, wealth and body makes it difficult for him to renounce the desire of acquiring them, and much more difficult to spurn honour and fame. Worldly objects appear as necessary because of his attachment for the body and the world; the sense of their necessity gives rise to desire, and man engages in activity for the fulfilment of that desire. If he fails to achieve his end through such activity he goes even to the length of begging. The root of all these evils is attachment, which we may also define as 'attraction' for the world. We develop this attraction for objects which are agreeable to us and objects which afford us pleasure appear favourable to us. Similarly, that which is disagreeable and causes pain gives rise to hatred which in its turn gives rise to enmity, jealousy, anger, fear, grief and many other evils and through work involving violence and injury to others man suffers a spiritual fall. Therefore, love and hatred are the root of all evils, and these two take their origin from ignorance. When man realizes this fact the impulses of love and hatred in him get attenuated, and these attenuated impulses are completely destroyed through remembrance of and fixing one's thoughts on the name, form, greatness and glory of God. Then his mind and senses are naturally brought under his control and in that state it becomes easy for him to practise Karmayoga in the form of renunciation of attachment and self-interest, through which practice, again, he succeeds in attaining supreme bliss and supreme peace.

How to Conquer Dislike ?

All sorrow proceeds from a sense of dislike or aversion, therefore for the total annihilation of sorrow it is necessary to conquer the feeling of dislike. There are two ways of doing this: the pursuit of Bhakti (Devotion) and the pursuit of Jñāna (Knowledge). Both of these are excellent methods. In the *Gītā*, Chapter III, verse 3, the Lord has recommended Jñānayoga for the Jñānī (he who is inclined to the path of Knowledge), and Karmayoga for the Bhakta (he who is inclined to the path of Devotion), according to the capacity and taste of the aspirant. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that for the ordinary man with all his imperfections the path of Devotion is easier to follow. Through the power of Devotion, the root of all sorrow, viz., the feeling of dislike may be wholly uprooted and destroyed. A true devotee of God cannot entertain the feeling of repugnance towards any creature, or anything whatsoever; for he knows that it is God and God alone Who resides as the self in the heart of all creatures. Therefore, to hate any creature will be tantamount to hating God Himself. Besides this, he sees nothing but the good-will of God both in the production and destruction of things. How and whom shall he hate under the circumstances ? God creates the various objects in this world simply in order that they may afford pleasure and pain to the different souls according to the nature of their past actions. He who realizes this will take every decree of God as cheerfully as a friend would take the award of a friend, or a devoted wife would take the decision of her husband. A noble and devoted wife likes only those things that are liked by her husband. In other words, her likes and dislikes are wholly guided by the likes and dislikes of her husband. She remains contented with whatever provisions, good, bad or indifferent, her husband supplies her with and whatever he does. So does the devotee also feel that whatever God does, does for the best and accordingly rejoices in every act of God in the production as well as destruction of things. That is to say, he treats whatever he gets in the shape of

good and evil things or in the shape of pleasure and pain, either involuntarily or through the will of another, as a sport of the Lord, being prompted by His will, and therefore remains merged in joy at all times. In fact, even the analogy of a devoted wife cannot be applied to the relation between God and His devotee. For man is guided by self-interest, and his knowledge being imperfect he is also liable to error. But God being infallible His sports are full of justice and wisdom and are directed towards the good of all creatures.

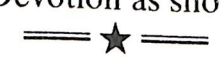
Careful consideration will show that the attraction we feel towards worldly objects has also to be conquered; for worldly enjoyments being of a momentary and transient nature, and painful in consequence, the joy we derive from worldly amenities and favourable circumstances is practically synonymous with sorrow. Where there is a feeling of agreeability in respect of a worldly object, it goes without saying that there must be a feeling of disagreeability in respect of its contrary, and where there is a feeling of agreeability and disagreeability, attraction and repulsion are bound to be there. Attraction and repulsion give rise to evils like lust and anger, which bring terrible suffering in their train. Therefore, the feeling of agreeability and disagreeability in respect of the world should be discarded as the root of infinite sorrow. It is, therefore, that the Lord advises us in the *Gītā*, Chapter XIII. verse 9, to maintain an attitude of perfect equanimity in facing the good and the evil, nay, at all times.

Such a balance of mind can be easily attained through surrender and submission to God. God is our friend and well-wisher; He is merciful and loving and is an embodiment of Consciousness; he who realizes this can never forget God. He would surrender his own will and submit to the will of God. Offering his mind, reason and senses to God, he becomes an automaton in His hand. He does whatever the Lord makes him do and does not undertake any work on his own initiative; he remains cheerful under all circumstances and rejoices in whatever is ordained by God. This is true surrender.

To feel attracted towards what gives pleasure and to be repelled by what gives pain is natural. On a deep analysis it will be found that no object belonging to this world is truly delightful. God alone

is the embodiment and source of supreme delight; therefore, all agreeability should in reality be in God alone. He who realizes this secret submits to the will of God. All his activities are henceforth agreeable to Him. In every sport of the all-sportive Lord he now begins to behold the Lord Himself. That is how all disagreeability and alongwith it all suffering and sorrow cease to exist for him. He feels transported with joy every moment to find the sport of the Lord as well as the beloved Lord Himself favourable to him in everyway.

Considered from the point of view of Knowledge (Jñāna), attraction and repulsion in regard to the object of the world will be found to have no existence at all. For the world is like a dream and the objects seen in a dream are all illusory; therefore, attraction and repulsion in regard to such objects are also illusory. A person awaking from a dream no longer sees the objects of his dream, and comes to realize the illusory nature of those objects; even so one who has realized the Truth comes to regard all objects of the world as illusory. In this way when one comes to regard all objects of the world as illusory like the objects perceived in a dream, no such thing as attraction or repulsion for them remains. He now perceives nothing else than God, the embodiment of Consciousness and Bliss. Only the one all-pervading, eternal principle, viz., All-Consciousness and blissful Paramātmā exists in his view, the Paramātmā who is beyond evil and uniform to all. Therefore, he who is established in oneness with the all-conscious and all-blissful Paramātmā develops equality of vision in regard to the whole world, and he no longer feels attraction or repulsion to anything in this world. With the disappearance of this feeling and attraction and repulsion all evil in the shape of likes and dislikes and alongwith it all suffering and sorrow come to an end and one comes to attain supreme peace and supreme joy. Truly speaking, this supreme joy or Brahma alone is our true self. He who realizes this cannot feel repugnance towards anything, because none can entertain a feeling of repugnance towards one's own self. What one should do is to conquer this feeling of repugnance, which is the root of all suffering and sorrow, either through this knowledge or through the practice of Devotion as shown above.



The Secret of Karmayoga

The secret of Karmayoga is very deep and profound. The real truth about this Yoga is known either to God Himself or to the great souls who have realized God through the practice of Karmayoga. For a man like me it is extremely difficult to reveal this secret, for the secret of Karmayoga is not fully known to me. Moreover, what little I know of it I cannot express through words, and whatever I say I cannot reduce to practice. All the same, an attempt is being made to bring out, according to my own poor lights, a few facets of the truth about Karmayoga in the form of a dialogue. The Lord says:—

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात्॥

(*Gītā* II. 40)

"In this path of disinterested action, a beginning made is not lost (the seed is not destroyed) and there is no fear of contrary results (due to omissions). Therefore, even an ounce of practice of this (Yoga of disinterested action) rids the Sādhaka of great fear (viz., that of birth and death)."

Question—What is meant by the statement that a beginning made in Karmayoga is not lost? Does it mean that the ball set rolling once does not come to a standstill, or does it imply that whatever advance is made in the path does not go in vain ?

Answer—Latencies of past sins, evils like egoism, attachment, sense of possession etc., and contact with objects of the senses as well as with erring souls and people devoted to sense-enjoyments arrest our progress no doubt, but whatever advance is made on the path of disinterested action is not lost. For, there is no reason why an action performed without reference to its fruit and without attachment and with a balanced mind, according to the behests of

God, should be lost. Only an action done with a particular object in view comes to an end after it has yielded the desired result.

Question—What is meant by the statement that the Sādhaka does not incur a sin whereby he may have to meet with contrary results ?

Answer—A person failing to do some service in return to a benefactor is held guilty of an omission. Similarly, one who is guilty of a lapse in his service to a deity, a departed ancestor, a living monarch, or even an ordinary human being, may suffer as a result of the latter's displeasure. But a lapse in the practice of Karmayoga, or disinterested action, does not bring any contrary result or harm to the doer; nor is he held guilty of an omission if he is unable to proceed further and abandons the practice after a certain stage.

Question—There are some commentators who interpret the word 'प्रत्यवाय' occurring in the above verse as impediment (विघ्न). Does the word admit of this interpretation ?

Answer—The interpretation of the word as 'impediment' is not warranted by reason. In the practice of disinterested action impediments are likely to appear, but they do not ultimately prove harmful, nay, they are ultimately conducive to good result (*Vide Gītā* VI. 40—42).

Question—What is the force of the word 'अपि' in the above text ?

Answer—It means, when even an ounce of practice of this removes the greatest of fears, there can be little doubt that its thorough and consummate practice will remove the worst of fears.

Question—How does even an ounce of practice of Karmayoga remove the greatest of fears ?

Answer—The ounce of practice of Karmayoga gradually develops through habit and eventually succeeds in liberating the Sādhaka.

Question—If the ounce of practice of Karmayoga removes the greatest of fears only when it develops, what is the point in extolling this ounce of practice ?

Answer—The efficacy of the spirit of disinterestedness lies in liberating the Sādhaka from worldly bondage. Therefore, this spirit is not lost until it has borne its fruit, nor can it yield any other fruit. It is bound finally to make the Sādhaka perfectly disinterested and thus bring about his liberation; herein lies its greatness, or special utility.

Question—The services of those who work in a religious institution in a selfless and devoted manner, either without any remuneration or on a scanty pay, should certainly be regarded as disinterested inasmuch as they have no selfish end to serve through such services. But they do not appear to derive the amount of spiritual gain that is said to accrue from the practice of Karmayoga or disinterested action. Why ?

Answer—Yes, friends who are actually engaged in such service also say that they do not appear to derive from their services the amount of benefit that should result from the practice of disinterested action; therefore, it is possible that due to their ignorance of the secret of such action, the spirit of true renunciation may be lacking in them. That is why they fail to derive the utmost benefit. Had it not been the case, they would certainly have derived the amount of benefit promised in the *Gītā* and other scriptures from the practice of Karmayoga, or disinterested action. One cannot be said to have renounced everything by merely renouncing gold and woman externally. In fact, such external renunciation is not so essential in Karmayoga: it is the spirit that counts here. Therefore, it is very essential for the Sādhaka following this path to renounce the desire for honour, fame, the feelings of prestige, attraction and repulsion, egoism and attachment etc., together with all sense-enjoyments derived through wife, children, wealth, and the like. Till he has renounced all these, the Sādhaka cannot derive full benefit.

Question—Does it imply that the selfless service of these workers do not satisfy the test of Karmayoga even partially ?

Answer—One's services do satisfy the test of Karmayoga to the extent he practises self-denial, and to that extent he is bound to be benefited by the practice.

Question—When it is stated that even an ounce of practice of Karmayoga removes the greatest of fears, what is the harm if we do not practise more of it, for in any case, the Sādhaka is bound to be liberated?

Answer—Yes, he will be liberated no doubt, but there is no time-limit for the same. He may be liberated in this very birth, or in some other birth. For the ounce of practice he has to his credit will bring about liberation only when it has developed in due course. Therefore, those who are anxious to attain liberation soon should diligently strive to remove the shortcomings in their practice till the last breath.

Question—What is meant by the expression 'an ounce of practice' of Karmayoga in the text?

Answer—First of all let us try to understand what Karmayoga exactly means. Any good action enjoined by the scriptures goes by the name of Karma, and the spirit of equanimity in regard to the same accompanied by complete renunciation of attachment and selfish interest, or in other words the spirit of disinterestedness, is what they call Yoga. This spirit of disinterestedness is the keynote, secret or soul of Karmayoga. Therefore, whatever action is accompanied by this feeling of disinterestedness is designated as Karmayoga. Good actions which are prescribed in the scriptures, but are not accompanied by the spirit of disinterestedness, are designated as Karma, but not as Karmayoga. Therefore, even the noblest of actions, such as the performance of sacrifices, charity, austerities etc., done for a whole life-time with a selfish motive, are not of much value inasmuch as they yield only transitory results; whereas even ordinary pursuits sanctioned by the scriptures, such as agriculture, trade, service or manual work carried on in a small measure but in disinterested spirit, are of the highest value inasmuch as they are conducive to supreme good. Therefore, even an ounce of practice of what is called Karmayoga, or disinterested action, gradually developing, ultimately rids the Sādhaka of the greatest of fears; whereas a number of practices sanctioned by the scriptures, but carried on with an interested

motive, cannot remove the terrible fear of births and deaths.

Question—Kindly explain at some length what is meant by Karmayoga, or disinterested action.

Answer—Karmayoga, or disinterested action, consists in performing duties enjoined by the scriptures for the sake of God, or as an offering to God, renouncing their fruit and attachment, and in the spirit of carrying out the behests of God and with a balanced mind. The other terms applied to this *Yoga* are Samatvayoga (the Yoga of equanimity), Buddhiyoga (the Yoga of Discrimination), Tadartha Karma (action for God's sake) etc.

Question—What is exactly meant by renunciation of the fruit of action?

Answer—It means complete renunciation of the desire for all objects of worldly enjoyment such as wife, children, wealth, power, honour, fame, prestige, and heavenly bliss etc.

Question—What is meant by renunciation of attachment ?

Answer—It means complete renunciation of the feeling of attraction towards things or actions which afford worldly enjoyment and are agreeable to the senses and the mind, which is variously termed as Rāga (partiality), Rasa (zest, or flavour), Saṅga (attachment) etc.

Question—What should be understood by the term 'behests of God'?

Answer—'Behests of God' here means the injunctions of the Śruti (Vedas), the Smṛtis, and holy books such as the *Gītā*, and the teachings of God-realized men.

Question—What is meant by Samatva Buddhi (the spirit of equanimity)?

Answer—Samatva Buddhi means maintaining a balance of mind under all circumstances; for instance, in pleasure and pain, gain and loss, success and failure, fame and ill-repute, life and death, and so on.

Question—What is the distinction between 'action for the sake of God (भगवदर्थ कर्म) and 'action as an offering to God(भगवदर्पण कर्म)?'

Answer—From the point of view of the result, there is no

distinction. The result of both these types of actions is supreme good, that is, God-Realization. In the practice of the two, however, there is some difference.

(A) ACTION FOR THE SAKE OF GOD

To practise worship or service of God through some representation, or to perform actions enjoined in the scriptures according to the commands of God, and as a matter of duty, for the attainment of Divine Love, or for the pleasure or realization of God, simply for the sake of obeying the commands of God, is action for the sake of God. In other words, to perform one's legitimate duties placing all these objects, or anyone of these objects in view is action for the sake of God (*vide Gītā* XII.10).

(B) ACTION AS AN OFFERING TO GOD

It means regarding all legitimate duties enjoined in the scriptures as well as one's very Self, including the mind, speech and body, as possessions of God, and offering the same to Him in that spirit. In other words, it means regarding oneself as wholly dependent on God in the matter of performance of all actions and offering one's whole being to Him in the same way as a puppet places itself completely at the disposal of the showman. The puppet, being a lifeless object, does not voluntarily submit to the control of the showman; it is the showman himself who keeps it under his control. The devotee, however, voluntarily chooses to remain under the control of his Divine Lord and is thus even superior to the puppet in the matter of surrender. Besides this, to feel enraptured at every moment by visualizing His form and mercy at every step and to perform all actions according to the behests of his Lord and as His instrument, regarding everything as belonging to Him and thus to be freed from all pride and egoism, is the best form of action as an offering to God (*vide Gītā* IX. 27-28).

Question—Is the practice of Karmayoga, or disinterested action, very difficult to perform?

Answer—Truly speaking, it is not very difficult. Of course, it is difficult for him who recognizes it to be difficult, and easy for him who recognizes it to be easy.

Question—If such be the case, the Sādhaka should certainly recognize it to be easy. But why does it appear so difficult even to those who pursue it turning their back on gold, woman, kinsmen and even bodily comfort?

Answer—Through fickleness of mind, the desire for honour, fame, prestige and so on, weaknesses like partiality and prejudice, egoism, attachment and ignorance, lack of faith and love, and want of knowledge of its secret and glory, the practice of Karmayoga may appear difficult to them.

Question—What are the special weaknesses which act as hindrances to the practice ?

Answer—Lack of faith and love, the desire for honour and fame, fickleness of mind, carelessness, lethargy, ignorance, attachment and egoism—these are the special weaknesses which act as hindrances to the practice of Karmayoga.

Question—What should the Sādhaka do in order to overcome these weaknesses?

Answer—Withdrawing the mind from all worldly enjoyments through dispassion and discrimination, and surrendering himself to God, he should put forth the best of efforts for the practice of Karmayoga with reverence and love till the last breath. Through such efforts it may be possible to get rid of all sufferings and weaknesses and attain Supreme Bliss and Supreme Peace at no distant date.

Question—What is meant by 'putting forth the best of efforts, even to the last moment?'

Answer—To regard even honour, fame, and prestige, nay, life itself to say nothing of wealth, woman, physical enjoyment and comforts as of no value as compared even to an ounce of practice of Karmayoga, and to remain constantly and diligently striving for the same—this is what is meant by 'putting forth the best of effort even to the last moment.'

Question—What are the reasons for our failure to put forth such diligent effort ?

Answer—Lack of true knowledge about the glory and secret of Karmayoga is the main reason for this failure.

Question—What should be done to gain this true knowledge about its glory and secret?

Answer—The glory and secret of Karmayoga can be truly known through a study of scriptures like the *Gītā* which deal with them, or through the contact of exalted souls who have knowledge of them, and by scrupulously and earnestly following their instructions. He who comes to have a true knowledge of the glory and secret of Karmayoga or disinterested action, can never give it up. Through continued practice of Yoga, he gradually overcomes weaknesses like egoism, sense of possession and attachment for worldly things, etc., and attains in course of time, a permanent attitude of equanimity towards the whole world. He who is thus unshakably established in equality is established in God, inasmuch as God Himself is equal or impartial to all. In this way he is rid of all sins, trials and tribulations and attains Supreme Bliss and Supreme Peace. He who attains this state even at the last moment of his life overcomes the terrible fear of births and deaths and realizes God, the embodiment of Consciousness and Bliss (*vide Gītā,* II. 72).

Methods of Mind-Control

A friend asks: "The mind is very fickle and careless; it is most difficult to bring it under control. The scriptures no doubt mention many methods of restraining the mind. We read and hear about them, and try to understand and practise them according to our humble capacity. But the mind does not become steady. What is the easiest method of bringing it under control?"

For the total annihilation of sorrow and attainment of Bliss, mind-control is indispensable. It can be brought under control through sincere and devoted effort on the lines laid down by the Śrutis, Smṛtis and other books of scripture. The real fact is that Sādhakas do not make sufficient effort, and go on making enquiries about the easiest method. That is why generally the majority of people complain that the mind does not become steady. The ancient Ṛṣis, who wrote the scriptures, have mentioned many methods of controlling the mind. Among them some methods appear easy to some people, while other methods appear easy to others. Owing to differences in the character, temperament and qualifications of men, these various methods have been laid down by the great Ṛṣis. I shall try in the following lines to describe the practices which appear easy to my humble understanding.

First of all, it should be borne in mind that restraint of the mind is difficult unless it is subdued, and subjugation of the mind is difficult unless it has attained purity. Therefore, it is one's first duty to purify the mind. The Mahātmās as well as God Himself has mentioned many practices for attainment of purification of the mind. Cultivation of friendliness towards the happy, of compassion towards the distressed, of pleasure towards the virtuous and indifference towards the sinner has been mentioned by Maharṣi Patañjali as a method of attaining purification of mind. Through attainment of purification, the mind gets bright and complacent. Then it becomes steady and restrained:

मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षाणां सुखदुःखपुण्यापुण्यविषयाणां
भावनातश्चित्तप्रसादनम्।

(*Yogasūtras* I. 33)

In the *Gītā*, Chapter V. Verse11, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa has advised

Sādhakas to perform action without any attachment as a means of purification of the mind. The instructions of other saints and Mahātmās also are almost on the same lines as this.

The sum and substance of all these instructions is that to engage oneself in the welfare of all beings and render happiness to all without seeking honour and without any motive of self-interest is an excellent means of purification of the heart. But there is another method which is even better than this, and that is the Kīrtana of the Names and glories of God.

"Just as fire burns even when unwillingly touched, similarly Śrī Hari when remembered even by wicked men destroys their sins." *

Says the *Gītā*:—

"Even if the most sinful worships Me with undivided heart, he should be accounted as virtuous, because he has resolved rightly. He soon becomes righteous and obtains eternal peace. O Arjuna, know it for certain that My devotee never perishes". †

When sins are eradicated through practices mentioned above, the mind automatically becomes pure and free. It is then very easy for it to become one-pointed and restrained. A mind thus become pure and free attains the qualification of obtaining Supreme Bliss.

It is necessary to understand the character of the mind. The scriptures are really profuse in their description of its character.

Maharṣi Patañjali also says:—

प्रमाणविपर्ययविकल्पनिद्रास्मृतयः ।

(*Yogasūtras* I. 6)

"Proof, error, doubt, sleep and memory, these are the five functions of the mind."

---

* हरिर्हरति पापानि दुष्टचित्तैरपि स्मृतः ।
अनिच्छयापि संस्पृष्टो दहत्येव हि पावकः ॥

† अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥
क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रति जानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

(IX. 30-31)

The cessation of these functions is Yoga.

One Mahātmā has described the states of the mind to be five—distracted (क्षिप्त), scattered (विक्षिप्त), confounded (मूढ), fixed on one object (एकाग्र), and restrained (निरुद्ध); and another has characterized it only as fancy or thought (सङ्कल्प). They are all correct from their own points of view. In short, therefore, it may be stated that that which is the substratum of thought, or that in which thoughts or fancies arise is mind. Being the substratum of thought, it may also be characterized as thought. Now, the point to be considered is what is the easiest method of restraining thought? But even before that it is necessary to understand why thoughts repeatedly make their appearance and the cause of distaste for any sort of spiritual discipline. Together with this it is also necessary to form an idea of the hindrances which make their appearance during spiritual practice.

Referring to these hindrances, Maharṣi Patañjali says in his *Yoga-Darśana:*—

व्याधिस्त्यानसंशयप्रमादालस्याविरतिभ्रान्तिदर्शनालब्धभूमिकत्वानवस्थितत्वानि चित्तविक्षेपास्तेऽन्तरायाः ।
दुःखदौर्मनस्याङ्गमेजयत्वश्वासप्रश्वासा विक्षेपसहभुवः ॥

(I. 30-31)

"Sickness, incapacity for action, doubt, carelessness, idleness, thirst for sense-enjoyment, delusion, non-attainment of Samādhi, and unsteadiness—these nine forms of distraction of the mind are hindrances to Yoga.

"Sorrow, agitation, unsteadiness of limbs, inhalation and exhalation—all these go together with the above nine forms of distraction."

The other scriptures also say, more or less, the same thing. Among these hindrances disease, incapacity, carelessness, idleness, attachment and unsteadiness, these six are primary; and among the six, again, idleness and unsteadiness are particularly harmful.

The main reasons for the appearance of endless thoughts on the surface of the mind are past impressions in the accumulated store of Karma (सञ्चित) and the Karma which has begun to bear fruit (प्रारब्ध), evil habit, attachment for sense-objects, past sins which obstruct the growth of attraction for spiritual practice, doubt, error, and lack of faith.

For the destruction of attachment for sense-objects one should constantly revolve in mind the thoughts of evil and misery involved in the enjoyment of the perishable and transient objects of the world and cultivate dispassion towards them and renounce them.

Prārabdha, or the Karma which has begun to bear fruit, is generally terminated through suffering and enjoyment, and Sañcita Karma, i.e., the accumulated store of sins, is destroyed through disinterested service of suffering humanity and practice of Japa of the Divine Name.

For removal of evil habit, doubt, error and lack of faith, association of virtuous souls and study of sacred literature are particularly helpful.

In the *Gītā, Chapter* VI, *Verse* 34, Arjuna queried Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa about this very question of mind-control. Recognizing the validity of Arjuna's doubt the Lord answered him by saying that though the mind was unsteady and fickle, it could be made steady through practice (अभ्यास) and cultivation of dispassion (वैराग्य).

"O possessor of mighty arms, the mind is undoubtedly unsteady and hard to control. But it can be brought under control through practice and dispassion."*

Restraint of the mind becomes easy when this instruction is carried out. Maharṣi Patañjali also corroborates this instruction:—

अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः । (*Yogasūtras* I.12)

"Through practice and dispassion, it (the mind) may be restrained."

Bhagavān Kapila, the author of the Sāṅkhya philosophy, also mentions practice and dispassion as the two methods of controlling the mind (वैराग्याभ्यासात्). The conclusion of the other scriptures also are almost identical in this respect. A devotee says:—

"Stop the fancies of the mind, by whatever method you can; either by Bhakti, or by Yoga, or by Jñāna."

The above discussion proves that practice and dispassion are the

---

* असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम्।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते॥ (VI. 35)

two sovereign methods of controlling the mind. One should, therefore, cultivate dispassion towards worldly objects and girding up one's loins begin the practice of controlling the mind. It is necessary in this connection to understand what constitute practice and dispassion. Lack of enjoyment of any object of this world consisting of the three Guṇas and total want of thirst or attachment for all objects is called dispassion. Other scriptures also define dispassion in almost these very terms. The term 'practice' is a comprehensive one. It requires to be explained at length, but instead of entering into details, we shall only touch upon the main points. With reference to 'practice', Maharṣi Patañjali says:—

तत्र स्थितौ यत्नोऽभ्यासः । (*Yogasūtras* I. 13)

"The attempt to fix the mind only on God is called practice."

स तु दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्कारासेवितो दृढभूमिः ।

(*Ibid.* I. 14)

"It becomes established when done constantly and reverentially for a sufficient length of time."

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa also says almost the same thing:—

"Withdrawing the wavering and unsteady mind from whatever objects it may run after, it should be repeatedly fixed on the Paramātmā." *

The easiest and best method of removing all spiritual hindrances and attaining steadiness of mind is the practice of Japa of the Divine Name and meditation on the Form of God. Maharṣi Patañjali also corroborates it:

ईश्वरप्रणिधानाद्वा । (*Ibid.* I. 23)

"Through Devotion and surrender to God also the mind will cease its function."

तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः ।
तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम् ।
ततः प्रत्यक्चेतनाधिगमोऽप्यन्तरायाभावश्च । (*Ibid.* I. 27—29)

---

* यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम् ।
ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् ॥

(*Gītā* VI. 26)

"The Name of God is Oṁ. Japa should be performed of this Name and the Form indicated by the Name should be meditated on. Through this practice all hindrances are removed and the Ātmā is realized."

The *Gītā* says:—

"O Arjuna, he who exclusively and constantly meditates on Me, I am easily accessible to that Yogī ever attuned to Me." *

That is why Japa of the Divine Name and meditation on the Form of Gōḍ should be constantly practised in a disinterested spirit.

The scriptures mention other forms of 'practice' as well through pursuit of anyone of which it is possible to bring the mind under control. The following are a few of the more important among them.

(1) Instead of withdrawing the mind from objects it feels tempted to dwell upon and then subduing it and fixing it on God, the easier course is to meditate on God in the very object it usually reflects upon. Therefore, this should be attempted with a view to restrain the functions of the mind. God being immanent everywhere, contemplation on Him according to one's light, practised with reverence and Love, brings about cessation of the mental function.

(2) The mind may also be made one-pointed and its functions may be stopped through fixing the eyes with feelings of Devotion and Love on the lotus-like face of an image or picture of either Bhagavān Śiva or Viṣṇu, or any other deity chosen by the Sādhaka, and feeling infinite compassion and Love flowing towards him from the Lord, placing the bee like mind on the lotus of the face of that embodiment of Bliss.

(3) If one stands early in the morning facing the sun with closed eyes, he will feel the whole surrounding pervaded by a strong mass of light. Keeping this light in view, let him imagine that the whole atmosphere is being filled with another mass of light which is a thousand times stronger than this, and that there exists nothing except that light. This is the Form of Paramātmā as Light. Thus forgetting the world and fixing the mind entirely on the Form of

---

* अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः॥

(VIII. 14)

God as Light, the mind may be made steady.

(4) Dispassion is naturally developed through the study and appreciation of the character of saints like Dadhīci, Ṛsabhadeva, Jaḍabharata, Śukadeva and others who possessed this quality among them. Therefore, even through the meditation of a Mahātmā, who possesses dispassion, who has totally annihilated all attachments of the world, dispassion may be developed and the functions of the mind may be stopped. This is also an easy method of bringing the mind under control. Maharṣi Patañjali also says:—'वीतरागविषयं वा चित्तम्' "the mind may be steadied even through the meditation of a person, who has overcome all attachments."

(5) There is a Nāḍī (nerve) called Suṣumnā in the heart, which is the seat of Supreme Bliss. The *Gītā* says:—'सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टः' "I am in the heart of all beings." Paramātmā is the embodiment of Consciousness and Bliss; therefore, Consciousness and Bliss should be contemplated on in this Nāḍī. All the other nerves of the body are under the control of this nerve and cease their function as soon as it stops to beat. The average movement of this Nāḍī is 78 to 80 per minute. The beat of pulse at the wrist or in the temples proceed in consonance with the movement of this Nāḍī. The mind may be steadied and as a consequence God may be realized through Japa of Oṁ practised with the rhythm of the movement of this Nāḍī, together with meditation on God, the embodiment of Consciousness and Bliss, in this centre. The practice is no doubt somewhat difficult, but if it is pursued at a lonely and secluded place where one is not likely to be disturbed by other sounds, success may be attained Maharṣi Patañjali also says:—

विशोका वा ज्योतिष्मती। (*Yogasūtras* I. 36)

"Or, the griefless state of illumination of the mind also steadies the mind."

This state is attained through meditation of God in the Suṣumnā as described above.

(6) Retiring to a quiet place possessing sacred associations, undisturbed by any sound which may cause distraction, sit at ease in the Svastika or any other posture, and closing the ear-holes with the tips of two fingers concentrate your mind on hearing the unstruck sound which is going on automatically within you. In the beginning

the Sādhaka will hear various sounds, but after some practice he will hear a sound similar to the tick of a watch repeating itself at the rate of 78 or 80 per minute. If that sound is imagined to be either Rāma, or Śiva, or Oṁ, it will be heard as either of those Names of God. If the mind is concentrated on that sound imagining it to be Brahma itself, the faculties of the mind may be stopped and God may be thereby realized. This practice appears from the outside to be somewhat hard, but when earnestly practised either in the middle of the night or very early in the morning it will not be found to be extraordinarily difficult.

(7) Repeating Oṁ at a stretch in imitation of the hum of bees, imagine God to be that sound. The faculties of the mind may be thus concentrated and fixed on God.

(8) The mind will become steady even through the meditation of an image or form for which one possesses reverence and Love. Maharṣi Patañjali also says:—

यथाभिमतध्यानाद्वा । (*Yogasūtras* I. 39)

"The mind may be steadied and its faculties may be stopped even through the meditation of a form for which one possesses a liking."

(9) Concentrating the mind on Oṁ, exhale deeply and try to the best of your ability without feeling any exhaustion to keep the breath outside imagining God to be present in it. This is also a good practice for controlling the mind. Maharṣi Patañjali says:—

प्रच्छर्दनविधारणाभ्यां वा प्राणस्य । (*Yogasūtras* I. 34)

"The mind may be steadied also through exhalation and attempting to fix the breath outside."

(10) Retiring to a sacred and lonely place, sit closing your eyes and meditate on God, the embodiment of Consciousness and Bliss, withdrawing all the faculties of the mind from worldly objects and renouncing all desires and thoughts. If any thought appears in the mind, it should be immediately driven out. With a heart full of dispassion erase from the mind all impressions of the world and even of the body so that you may altogether forget their existence. This is what is called hewing the tree of the world with the axe of dispassion. But, remember, the process of forgetting the existence of the body and of the world involves the danger of

producing sleep through the absorption of the mind in Prakṛti. Therefore, meditation on God should proceed side by side with the process of negation of the body and of the world, and one should resolutely fix oneself in such meditation. This is what is meant by surrender to God. Through this practice, the mind will gradually settle itself in the Form of the Paramātmā.

(11) Through exercise of discrimination and argument according to the four well-known lines of conciliation (साम), allurement (दाम), coercion (दण्ड) and creation of dissension (भेद), the mind may be steadied and God realized thereby. This is also an excellent method of God-Realization.

(A) To argue with the mind as one argues with a friend is what is called the policy of conciliation (साम). Taking the mind to be a simpleton and a friend address it as follows: "Dear friend, you are very fickle by nature; you get yourself involved in everything without any judgment, and this causes endless trouble. Please henceforward do not do anything without consultation with me. Just remember, whenever you involved yourself in any work without my consent it brought terrible difficulties on our head. You should give up this stupidity and foolishness and should never go anywhere or do anything without taking my consent. O mind, the world on which you meditate considering it to be the seat of happiness, does not contain any happiness at all; it is through delusion that it appears to you to be the source of happiness. You should reflect on this truth even from now, otherwise there is a terrible repentance in store for you in the future."

(B) To argue by offering temptation to the mind is the policy of allurement (दाम). For instance, one may argue:—"O mind, the joy from contact with worldly objects being limited by time and place is by nature momentary and transient. A delicious article of food is dear to the palate, and not to the ears or the sense of touch. The pleasure it gives is temporary, and not constant. Similarly, delightful music gives satisfaction to the ears, not to the tongue or to the sense of smell, and that satisfaction also is short-lived. On this analysis, you should understand that the pleasure given by every object, being limited by time and place, is perishable and transient. In comparison with the Supreme Bliss of God-

Realization, this worldly pleasure is not like even a fire-fly before the sun. The joy derived from worldly objects is no real joy, but only a reflection of it. That is why when the real joy is attained, this worldly pleasure disappears, as the stars disappear on the rising of the sun. Therefore, withdraw yourself from the pursuit of perishable and momentary worldly happiness, and try to attain the joy, which is eternal, in which lies peace and Supreme Bliss.

The amount of labour and trouble one has to undergo for gaining worldly happiness is not required for attaining Supreme Bliss. The more one understands the secret of it, the more he will go on gaining the Sāttvika type of happiness even during the period of practice. Therefore, give up these enjoyments of the world, and devote yourself only to God for the attainment of real happiness."

(C) If the mind does not yield to the policies of conciliation and allurement, attempt should be made to control it through the policy of coercion (दण्ड). To control one through threat is called application of the policy of coercion. Just as a king subdues his enemy through threat, even so the mind should be subdued. Thus:—

"O mind, if you persist in your habit of meditating on the world and on objects of enjoyment, I shall renounce everything and retiring to a forest or a cave perform austerities and thus bring you under subjection. Even if I die of hunger, I shall not care, but I shall certainly uproot your existence. It is owing to your foolishness and unsteadiness that you do not realize the terrible condition to which you and I have been brought through your meditation on the world. Therefore, either by the practice of Yama or Niyama, or by whatever means it may be possible, I shall set about to destroy you. For when I sit for meditation on God, you create vexation by producing all sorts of worldly pictures before me and thus deprive me of Divine meditation. When I sit for practice of Japa or study of the scriptures you induce me to finish them quickly pointing to the importance of false worldly work. Thus I fail to attain success in anything. When I attempt to perform patiently my daily obligatory spiritual duties and devotional practices you take shelter under sleep and thus stupefy me. On reflection it appears that you are my greatest enemy. Therefore, it is just and proper to destroy you by

whatever means I can. If you want to avoid destruction give up this habit of contemplation on the world and take without delay to meditation on God, so that you and I both may be blessed."

(D) With the object of gaining some purpose, to create misunderstanding among friends and relations by carrying tales against some to others and vice-versa, is known as the policy of sowing dissension (भेद). Thus in order to break the friendship and affection between the mind and the senses in connection with the enjoyment of worldly objects, this policy of dissension may be employed.

First of all, the senses may be addressed thus:—

"The mind is greedy, covetous and unsteady; it is a robber. Do not follow the dictates of the mind; every moment it changes its form." *

"O senses, the mind is extremely unsteady, greedy and ignorant; you should never suddenly do anything without judgment following the dictates of the mind. If you involve yourself in falsehood, hypocrisy, theft, adultery or any act of violence under the direction of the mind which is wholly swayed by lust, anger and greed, you will open yourself to terrible suffering both in this world and in the next. For instance, you will be punished by Law and lose prestige and suffer tortures in hell if you are found guilty of falsehood and hypocrisy. Similarly, theft and adultery will bring you social chastizement, infamy, legal punishment and terrible tortures in hell. Therefore, if you are interested in your own welfare give up vice and enjoyment and exercising judgment engage yourself in right conduct as well as in the acts of service and worship of God."

The mind should be told—"The senses serve their own purpose and enjoy objects with your help, and when their purpose is served they throw you into the pit to suffer tortures. For instance, you feel pleasure when the palate induces you to take a wrong diet mentioning it to be right, or the sense of touch induces you to indulge in the momentary joy of sex. But as their after-effects you become a victim of diseases and consequent suffering and have to repent all

* मन लोभी मन लालची, मन चंचल मन चोर।
मनके मते न चालिये, पलक पलक मन और॥

your life, and your strength, energy, brilliance, fame, virtue and longevity get destroyed. The other sense-pleasures also are of the same type as the above. Thus committing sins under the subordination of the senses you become a victim for suffering the tortures of hell. Therefore, O mind, if you carelessly neglect your true interest, you will suffer the fate of crores of other creatures. The suffering undergone by the beasts, birds and insects is nothing but the result of their neglect of the opportunities of human birth. If you take care this time, well and good; otherwise the present life also will be a terrible loss. Therefore, heed the warning, and do not waste a moment of this valuable human birth. To spend even a moment of this life without remembering God is as good as throwing oneself into the jaws of death. For a man attains whatever thought takes hold of him at the time of parting from life. And the last thought of a man generally happens to be what he has practised throughout life. This proves that the pursuit of thought of this perishable world is the same as falling repeatedly into the jaws of death. Therefore, regard worldly thoughts to be as good as death and withdrawing from them devote yourself only to remembrance of God. During your life of activity also when the faculties begin to run after worldly objects, meditate on the presence of God everywhere."

The *Gītā* says:—

"He who sees Me everywhere, and sees everything in Me, I am never lost from his view, nor is he ever lost from My view." *

Thus advising and instructing the mind, when the Sādhaka succeeds in engaging it in the constant meditation of God, it gets steady, and he is thus blessed with God-Realization.

* यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति॥ (VI.30)

Practices for God-Realization while Performing Action

In the present article it is proposed to discuss the problem—how one can attain spiritual good through practice of constant remembrance of God, even while engaged in action. It is certain that all people cannot abandon their worldly activities and devote themselves wholly to practices of Bhajana and meditation. In fact, according to the *Gītā*, there is no need to abandon such activities. People misconceive that the *Gītā* advocates only renunciation of the world. But this is not a fact; for was not Arjuna prepared to abandon his all and live on alms? Did he not, in plain words, say to the Lord—

गुरूनहत्वा हि महानुभावान्
श्रेयो भोक्तुं भैक्ष्यमपीह लोके।
हत्वार्थकामांस्तु गुरूनिहैव
भुञ्जीय भोगान्रुधिरप्रदिग्धान्॥

(*Gītā* II. 5)

"SIt is better to live on alms in this world without slaying these noble elders, because after killing them we shall enjoy only the blood-stained pleasures of wealth and lust."

But the Lord advised Arjuna to fight, for this was his *Sva-Dharma* (duty as a Kṣatriya); only in the process of fight He asked the latter to keep the mind fixed on Him—

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयम्॥

(*Gītā* VIII.7)

"Therefore O Arjuna, constantly think upon Me only and fight. With mind and intellect surrendered to Me, you will doubtless come to Me."

According to this teaching of the Lord, when even a war-like action is possible with the mind fixed on Him, how can there be any difficulty at all in carrying on other simple activities? Verse 56 of Chapter XVIII of the *Gītā* speaks of God-Realization being possible even when one is engaged in constant activities.

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सदा कुर्वाणो मद्व्यपाश्रयः।
मत्प्रसादादवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम्॥

"And the Karmayogī, who seeks refuge in Me through doing all actions, always gets, by My grace, the eternal, imperishable abode."

Therefore, taking refuge in God, one should engage oneself in activities. Some friends say that when Bhajana is pursued together with work, the quality of the work undergoes deterioration, and reversely when work is pursued with sufficient attention, the constancy of Bhajana cannot be maintained. What they say is undoubtedly true. But this difficulty is felt only in the beginning, and through the grace of God it disappears when one becomes habituated to the practice. Therefore, we should make it a point to form the habit of keeping the mind fixed on God while engaged in activities. The illustration of the rope-dancer may be cited to bring out the point. The rope-dancer performs many feats while dancing on the rope, he beats the drum and sings, but all these activities notwithstanding, his mind is centred only on the balance of his feet. Even so we should carry on work just as he sings and beats the drum, and keep the mind fixed on God just as he keeps his mind fixed on the balance of the body.

Whenever we take up any work, let us try to do it together with Japa of Divine Name, either through the breath or orally, and with meditation of the Divine Form, with consciousness of the Lord's virtues and glory. At the time of doing the work the idea should be cultivated that the work is God's and that we are performing it according to His desire and for His pleasure. We should ever feel happy to imagine that the Lord stands before us watching our activities.

Thus it may be possible for one to realize God easily if he forms the habit of doing work keeping the mind fixed in meditation on God and performing Japa of His Name either through breath or through speech. While forming this habit, if his work suffers a little in the beginning, there is nothing to worry. The real point is, there should be no deterioration in the practices of Bhajana and meditation.

We should make it a point to worship God regularly everyday, both in the morning and in the evening, following the rules prescribed for us according to our respective qualifications. For morning worship may help us, if God so wills, to keep the remembrance of God intact throughout the day. In order to maintain this remembrance as continuous as the flow of oil, we

should picture God to be present with us during every form of physical activity. The idea should be constantly cultivated in the mind that whatever we do, we do it directly under God's direction. Just as a teacher holds an infant by the hand and teaches it to trace the alphabet, even so God guides us at every step and makes us do all that we are doing in the world. Just as a puppet dances according as it is made to dance by the show-man, even so we should act placing the leading-strings in the hand of God.The practice will make us realize peace immediately and we shall earn by it the special pleasure of God. Similarly, evening worship may help us, if God wills, to maintain the remembrance of God at night intact, and even at the time of falling to sleep. This will remove evil dreams and will develop purity of the mind, and help us to maintain uninterrupted joy and peace. Therefore, we should always feel delighted imagining the hand of God to be over our head, and devote every moment of life to the best and purest forms of activity, regarding all enjoyments, comforts, sin, indolence and carelessness to be as harmful as death. We should faithfully carry on all activities according to God's behests together with the practice of the Japa of His Name and meditation of His Form with consciousness of the Lord's virtues and glory.

In this practice of Karmayoga the following are the greatest hindrances—anger, resentment, jealousy, fear, ill-feeling, enmity hatred etc. These should be wholly renounced, knowing them to be as harmful as death. The best means of getting release from the bondage of these evils is surrender to the will of God. There can be no doubt that these evils could be wholly eradicated by complete surrender to God; but what is more, freedom from their influence may be obtained even by the cultivation of delight at whatever may be experienced through another's action, and without one's own seeking, taking it as a gift from God. The moment one learns to look upon every unfavourable incident as a divine dispensation, he will get over the above impediments. Whenever anything takes place which we dislike, we should know that the hand of God is certainly behind the incident. He has ordained this as an act of grace on us, and omniscient though He is, He is trying to put our faith to the test. We should, therefore, take every precaution that we do not fail to

come out successful in the test. He who thus feels delighted when he is put to the test is a devotee in the true sense of the term. To feel happy in every dispensation of God is the supreme duty of the devotee. Therefore, he who aspires to be a devotee must learn to be happy under every circumstance ordained by God. God sends us as a warning what we dislike, so that freed from sins we may become pure and gather patience and endurance. Calamities like floods, earthquakes, epidemics and famines etc., which occasionally overtake us without our seeking are sent as visitations from God. Injuries which take place through the instrumentality of other men, animals or birds, should be similarly regarded as having been ordained by God. Thus in these unfavourable circumstances also our delight should be so intense that a poor man does not feel it even in the event of his acquiring the philosopher's stone.

We should know that we have made some progress towards God when blame and dishonour will appear to us as objects of relish. That state of existence is, indeed, quite the reverse of our present state. The honour and praise which now appear to us as sweet as nectar will begin to appear as poison, when we have surrendered ourselves to God. We feel joy when we hear our praise; when this will remain undisturbed even at the time we hear our blame—in other words, when blame will produce the same waves of joy as we feel when we are praised, we should know that we have come near God. Then, we shall enjoy the same amount of delight whether we are presented with a garland of flowers or chastised with shoes.

We should look upon those who blame us with the same eye as we do upon those who praise us. Mahātmā Kabīradāsa goes so far as to say that a reviler and critic should be welcomed with open arms giving him place in your own cottage. Says he—

निन्दक नियरे राखिये आँगन कुटी छवाय।
बिन पानी साबुन बिना निर्मल करै सुभाय॥

"Keep the caluminator near you, building a cottage for him in the same quadrangle. By his nature he will make you pure, without even soap and water."

Thus, the critic and slanderer should be kept as close to us as possible, for that will compel us to rectify the action which becomes the subject of his criticism. Man does not easily detect his

own errors, but when they are pointed out by a critic, one who is anxious to improve himself will necessarily try to remove them. Therefore, we should form the habit of hearing our own criticism by others and feel a sort of joy in hearing it. When this habit is formed, there will be an end both to our shortcomings, which are the subjects of criticism of others, as well as the resentment we feel in hearing ourselves calumniated. In order to show how this actually takes place, we give below the illustration of an imaginary incident.

There was a shopkeeper who never entertained even the least trace of anger, jealousy or hatred towards anybody. Whatever happened he felt it to have been prompted by God Himself. He had wholly surrendered himself to the feet of the Lord. A fellow-merchant who kept a shop nearby finding his neighbour contented under all circumstances, and never giving way to anger, once made up his mind to rouse his neighbour's anger by any means he could. Entering the latter's shop, he started to quarrel over every statement made by the latter. He used many harsh and unbecoming words against the fellow, but all this failed to produce even the least impression on him. Finding his friend as good as a damp sheet even under such verbal chastisement, the merchant felt somewhat discouraged, but his failure made him all the more determined to test the anger of his neighbour. Approaching the latter a few days after, he said, 'I propose today to make a holiday visit to my father-in-law's place, and shall be pleased if you come with me'. In order to satisfy his friend and neighbour, the artless devotee agreed to the proposal and prepared himself to accompany the former. When about to start, the fellow-merchant said his servant was not present at the time and there was an earthen vessel containing sweets which was to be carried as a present to his father-in-law. Would his friend favour him by carrying it on his head? The devotee gladly placed the vessel on his head and began to walk ahead of his neighbour. When they reached a central place where there was a big crowd, the fellow-merchant suddenly broke the earthen vessel from behind with a stroke of his stick. The vessel was full of mud and dirty water with which the poor fellow who carried the vessel was now literally bathed. Seeing this plight of the man, all the people in the

crowd laughed at him in derision, and his neighbour also coming in front of him began to laugh and enjoy the fun. The devotee, who was the victim of this wicked fun, finding all people laughing, heartily joined them all by laughing as loud as the others. Thereupon, the fellow-merchant asked; 'Friend, we are all laughing at your sorry plight, but what makes you laugh yourself?' The devotee replied—'I laugh feeling the infinite grace of God upon me. And how great is your kindness to me that you take care of me at every step ! What interest have people in other's welfare ? But how shall I praise you ? It was indeed, extremely kind of you to act in a manner that I might test myself how far I satisfied the standard of non-anger'. As soon as he heard this noble reply, all the merry-making of the wicked neighbour disappeared as in a flash; the evil thoughts of his mind totally vanished; his eyes were opened and throwing himself at the feet of his friend, he now began to crave pardon for his errors. The devotee took him on his bosom and consoled him saying—'Friend, I look upon you as my teacher. It was because of you that I could learn the lesson of non-anger, God used you as an instrument and arranged all that happened only for my good. Please do not worry over this at all. The will of God was behind what took place here.'

Inasmuch as he sincerely felt that whatever happened in the world happened through the will of God, that great soul, though he was so openly and publicly insulted before a crowd, felt no resentment against it.

It is for the good of devotees themselves that God makes the circumstances adverse for them. Those who instead of feeling upset in the face of such difficulties remain constantly happy regarding those difficulties to be gifts from God, are alone true devotees. Reversely, if we do not feel happy over God's dispensation, if we do not feel delighted in His delight, what sort of devotees are we ? Therefore, we should feel pleasure even when we find ourselves placed amidst such adverse circumstances, for when we do so we thereby destroy our past sins, our soul-force and patience increase and pari passu due to remembrance of God all prohibited action cease, enemies turn into friends and poison

transforms itself into nectar.

Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsajī also said the very same thing—

गरल सुधा सम अरि हित होई। तेहि मनि बिनु सुख पाव न कोई॥

This ideal is found fully realized in the lives of devotees like Prahlāda and Mīrā. Mīrābāī was a devotee who had wholly surrendered herself at the feet of the Lord. Annoyed by her devotional practices, the Rāṇā decided to put an end to her life and sent her a cup of poison saying that it was consecrated water (water with which the image of the Lord was bathed). Needless to say, the great devotee with the Divine Name on her lips drank off the contents of the cup. There could be nothing more valuable to her than the water consecrated by the feet of the Lord. How could God allow such a devotee to be injured in any way ? The poison in the cup, therefore, immediately turned into nectar. The Rāṇā was struck dumb at this miraculous happening and influenced by Mīrā's great devotion to the Lord got converted in the end into one of her devoted admirers. Such is the great power of genuine devotion !

Therefore, we also should remain satisfied, when anything unfavourable happens, taking it to be a dispensation of God, for without the will of the Lord not even a leaf in a tree has the power to move. One may inflict the deepest injury on us, but we should offer only love to the injurer feeling that the will of God was behind his action. We should not allow our respect for him to suffer any diminution. This is also an aspect of surrender to God. Even an ordinary beast like dog, ass etc., returns the love which is shown to it. It is a common sight to see a dog when it is licked by another dog to start licking his friend. Similarly, when enmity is started on one side, it is returned with enmity. If we, men, follow this rule of loving the friend and hating the enemy, what will be the point of distinction between us and ordinary beasts ? Therefore, we should offer only love, and as much of love as possible, even to our enemies. Our manhood will be truly established only when we follow this rule.

Look at the height of the ideal on this point which Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra has laid down for us by his own conduct. Against the will of King Daśaratha, Queen Kaikeyī is sending innocent Rāma

to exile for fourteen years. Śrī Rāma gladly accepts this order of exile. With how great humility and sweetness does he reply to the harsh words of Kaikeyī piercing the heart like arrows ? He says—'O mother, I shall enjoy the privilege of seeing the sages in the forest. Father has given this order, to which, again, there is your consent. My exile will make brother Bharata the ruler of the kingdom. What can be more fortunate than this ?' *

Though there was so much of humility and sweetness on Śrī Rāma's side, Kaikeyī was hard-hearted and cruel.

सहज सरल रघुबर बचन कुमति कुटिल करि जान।
चलइ जोंक जल बक्रगति जद्यपि सलिलु समान॥

"Though Raghuvara's words were as straightforward as possible, the wicked queen gave them a perverse twist; like a leech, which must always move crookedly, however smooth the water be."

When Śrī Sītājī expresses Her resolve to follow Śrī Rāma in exile, Kaikeyī encourages Her by offering Her a robe made of the bark of trees. She says—'O Sītā, put on this forest-garb.' Sītā takes the robe in Her hand. But a Princess,who never took the trouble of even putting on Her ornaments Herself, how should She know how to put on a robe of barks? She helplessly looks at Śrī Rāma. The Lord thereupon disregarding etiquette helps Her in putting on the robe. Seeing this pathetic sight all women in the King's Palace raised a loud lament. Sage Vaśiṣṭha thereupon strongly criticized Kaikeyī for her rude behaviour and gave his decision that Sītā was not to adopt the forest-garb. Without minding in the least the wicked behaviour of His step-mother, Śrī Rāma starts for His exile in the forest with a face like a full-blown flower, smiling as He passed the way. Not only this, when Bharata went to Citrakūṭa to bring Him back from exile, and again when He returned to Ayodhyā on the completion of the fourteen years of exile,

* मुनिगन मिलनु बिसेषि बन सबहिं भाँति हित मोर।
तेहि महँ पितु आयसु बहुरि संमत जननी तोर॥
भरत प्रानप्रिय पावहिं राजू। बिधि सब बिधि मोहिं सनमुख आजू॥

Śrī Rāma makes it a point to see Kaikeyī first and pay His respects to her. This ideal of conduct laid down by the Lord should teach us that however harshly a man may treat us, we should return the harshness only with love.

When we observe anybody to be angry with us; we should at once know that we have given him some offence, which has roused his anger. Why should he be angry without any offence on our part ? Thus the whole responsibility for his anger should be taken on our shoulders. If, instead of this, we ourselves become subject to anger, it would express nothing but our meanness. Anger nursed against any creature means anger against God Himself. Therefore, instead of anger, unmotived love should be entertained for everybody. For when we offer love to any creature, we offer love to God Himself. Thus through our conduct of love, we shall become the dearest object of love of God. In the *Gītā, Chapter* XII. *Verse* 15, the Lord describing the marks of His devotees says:—

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वेगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः॥

"He who is not a source of annoyance to the world, and who never feels offended with the world, who is free from delight and anger, perturbation and fear; he is dear to Me."

Therefore, while constantly remembering God, and engaged in activities according to the directions of God, Sādhakas should always feel themselves satisfied even amidst unfavourable circumstances, knowing these to be the dispensation of God; for every such dispensation leads only to God. If this secret is once truly realized, being blessed with God-Realization, they may attain for all time supreme joy and supreme peace.

How to Attain Blessedness Speedily ?

Whatever time people devote to the practices of God-Realization, there is a great necessity to utilize the same properly and introduce some improvements in the practices. The amount of earnest effort that should be made for these practices is not, as a matter of fact, made. Apart from two or three friends about whom I cannot pronounce any opinion, the majority of Sādhakas do not appear to be deriving much benefit from their practices. Whatever benefit they derive is much too ordinary. Therefore, realizing the importance of time effort should be made in future in such a way that, through the best use of the latter part of one's life, God may be realized as speedily and quickly as possible. Death is fast approaching. We shall have to quit the world all on a sudden. So long as death is at some distance, and the health of the body is unimpaired, one should be in earnest, from every point of view, for the soul's welfare.

For the attainment of blessedness by the Jīvātmā, or individual soul, this human birth alone is the only means. Life in the celestial world is also, no doubt, pure, but owing to the excess of enjoyments in that region, spiritual practice is difficult there. That is why even the celestials desire that they may take birth on earth as a human being, so that they may attain their soul's good. Obtaining this human birth, which is difficult even for the celestials to attain, those who indulge in playing cards and dice, in taking intoxicants like the hemp in the form of either smoke or liquid drink, or in idle talks and backbiting not only waste their invaluable time, but reincarnate as animals after death, or fall lower still. But the man possessed of wisdom, who realizing the importance of the invaluable moments of life, devotes himself earnestly to spiritual practices, may attain blessedness very quickly, indeed. Therefore, it is the duty of all seekers of knowledge to be in earnest about the proper utilization of time and introduction of improvements in their practices, and bringing, with a whole heart, their spiriitual

practices to a state of ripeness and perfection.

God has endowed us, human beings, with intelligence. It is necessary to turn it to the cultivation of good thoughts and practice of good deeds. The thoughtless individual who wastes the human life in condemnable activities like enjoyments of worldly objects, is in no way different from an animal. Truly speaking, he may be declared in some respects to be even more degraded. We should not entertain the idea even in dream that we may continue to remain steeped in our worldly enjoyments and realize God at the same time. To see day and night together is undoubtedly the same as plucking flowers in the air. Where there is enjoyment, God cannot stay there. The following statement of the saints is true to the letter:—

"Where there is Yoga (Union with God) there is no enjoyment; and where is enjoyment there is no Yoga. "Where there is enjoyment there is disease; where is disease, there is grief." *

It is impossible for a man addicted to enjoyments to engage himself in the practice of Yoga. Enjoyments lead to disease, and disease leads to grief. Therefore, for the total annihilation of sin and misery, disease and grief, one should turn one's face from worldly enjoyments and make steady advance with spiritual practices. In this ephemeral world, the only substantial thing is God. Apart from Him, all things are totally unsubstantial, momentary and perishable. Therefore, if owing to our attachment for accumulation of worldly things and their enjoyments we fail to realize God in this very life, it will have to be indisputably admitted that our life is only a burden to us.

Dear reader, please bestow your thought on the duty of man. God is inviting you to advance along the path of progress. Degradation is tantamount to failure in duty. Pay your attention to these rousing words of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa:—

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत्।

(*Gītā* VI. 5)

---

* जहाँ योग तहँ भोग नहिं, जहाँ भोग नहिं योग।
जहाँ भोग तहँ रोग है, जहाँ रोग तहँ सोग॥

"One should lift oneself up by one's own efforts and should not degrade oneself."

What does "lifting up" mean? It means progress. Progress does not consist in earning of money, nor in the increase of progeny. All these will be left behind here on earth. Renouncing the snare of these, go ahead in this most extraordinary path that uplifts the soul. Do not idly waste your time. Those who spend their time in carelessness, sloth, sleep and enjoyment deliberately throw themselves into fire. Carelessness itself is death. Wasting of time without any purpose is 'carelessness' (प्रमाद). Many of our friends no doubt set apart a portion of their time to spiritual practices, but the benefit they gain is as good as nil. The reason for this is that they do not properly utilize their time nor improve their methods. Retiring to solitude they never reflect that if the life is not reformed even under such favourable circumstances as birth in this sacred land of the Ṛṣis and that again, in the twice-born family, and with all the advantages enjoyed of holding discussions and hearing discourses on God, when will it be improved again ? And effort should be made now with care so that the greatest gain may be derived within the shortest time possible. What I shall submit to you in the following lines, according to my humble lights, will, I hope, make it clear to you how extremely great benefit may be gained even within a very short time.

First of all, let us take the Japa of Gāyatrī for consideration. What benefit is gained from a vocal utterance of the Mantra (formulae), ten times more than that is gained if it is muttered silently by moving the tongue without opening the mouth (Upāṁśu Japa). Mental Japa is ten times more powerful than Upāṁśu Japa, and hundred times more powerful than the ordinary vocal Japa (*Manu.* II. 84). This proves that whatever fruit man may gain in a hundred years by the practice of ordinary Japa, that very fruit he may gain in one year by the practice of mental Japa; and, again, if that very practice is carried on disinterestedly and in a hidden way, it will be no exaggeration to say that the fruit incapable of being obtained in a hundred years may be gained in the course of only six months. In the posterior *Gītā* described in the Aśvamedha Parva

of the *Mahābhārata,* Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa said to Arjuna: "He who strenuously meditates, day and night, on the embodiment of Knowledge and Bliss, being purified soon, attains the supreme state." Who is unaware that Śrī Dhruva of resolute vows accomplished the object of life by gaining the most difficult end of God-Realization in the course of only five months and a half ? Friends, we may take it for certain that if we take to our practice with the same amount of resolution, we may, at the present time, achieve the supreme object of human life in the course of only five days. But who meditates on God ? Whatever meditation is made is made only on objects of enjoyment. This has been described by the Lord in the *Gītā* as hypocrisy:—

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन्।
इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते॥

(*Gītā* III. 6)

"He who outwardly restraining the organs of sense and action, sits mentally dwelling on objects of senses, that man of deluded intellect is called a hypocrite."

When people sit in solitude for meditation, they at once begin to sleep. If in the meantime any respected person happens to reach there, they immediately sit up in a meditative posture. This is nothing but deception. God gets highly displeased with such behaviour. He forms the impression that these people want to cheat Him in the name of practice of devotion. Their object is only to please the people, though they assume the role of a Sādhaka doing spiritual practices in solitude. What is the need of this pretension? Sādhakas should amass in secret the invaluable wealth of Devotion. Bhajana practised disinterestedly, and in a secret way, brings result within the shortest time. To exchange Bhajana for getting wife or begetting children is also a great error. Though it does not lead to any spiritual fall, the result is most insignificant in value:—

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन।
आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ॥
तेषां ज्ञानी नित्ययुक्त एकभक्तिर्विशिष्यते।
प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽत्यर्थमहं स च मम प्रियः॥

(*Gītā* VII. 16-17)

"Four types of virtuous men worship me, Arjuna—the seeker of worldly objects, the sufferer, the seeker for knowledge and the man of wisdom."

"Of these, the best is the man of wisdom, constantly established in identity with Me and possessed of exclusive devotion. For extremely dear am I to the wise man (who knows Me in reality), and he is extremely dear to Me."

The Lord has described the unselfish devotee as His very Self. ज्ञानी त्वात्मैव मे मतम्—("The man of wisdom is verily My own Self"); he is the best of all. Therefore, like the Japa of Gāyatrī, if by the practice of Japa of any other formula or Divine Name, we intend to derive great benefit within a short time, we should introduce improvement in our practice on the lines stated above. At the same time, the Japa of the Mantra should be performed with full consciousness of its meaning, and with feelings of reverence and love. If the meaning of the Mantra is not understood, the Japa should be performed alongwith meditation of God. In all the four Vedas, there is no Mantra described as equal in greatness to the Gāyatrī, and yet people do not derive much benefit from it, because they do not practise its Japa with consciousness of its meaning, and with love and reverence. Manu clearly declares that he who daily practises ten rosaries of Japa of Gāyatrī gets rid of the greatest of sins in the course of three years only. But nowadays the Sādhakas' mind wanders somewhere, whereas the beads of the rosary rotate in his hand:—

"The rosary moves in the hand and the tongue moves within the mouth. The mind, however, wanders in all the four directions. This is no practice of Remembrance." *

The emphasis should not be laid on completing the number. The object of the Sādhaka is to please God. Then, why should there be deficiency in reverence and love ? The benefit that will be derived through the practice of only one rosary of Japa, when it is done by keeping the above ideals in view, was not and will not be gained by

---

* करमें तो माला फिरे, जीभ फिरे मुख मायँ।
मनुवा तो चहुँ दिसि फिरे, यह तो सुमिरण नायँ॥

doing Japa a thousand rosaries. Try this, this very day, and you will realize what an incalculable benefit may be gained within a short time. The number of rosaries you have revolved in the course of a year and a half will fall in value to the Japa of even one day. If nevertheless carelessness continues, it should be attributed to deficiency of faith.

Now, let us take the *Gītā* for consideration. A friend reads the *Gītā* from beginning to end, but does not possess the least understanding of its meaning and thoughts. During the study, his mind freely wanders here and there. Due to the oppressive pressure of thoughts in his mind, he is not even conscious what chapter and what verse he is reading. He carries on the work as a sort of slave labour without any hope of return. But it is free labour done for the sake of God. Therefore it cannot be wholly wasted. Another friend reads every verse with zest and proper understanding of its meaning. The fruit that may be gained by the study of one simple verse, when read with full understanding of the truth and secret, cannot be gained by a general reading of the whole seven hundred verses. Another Sādhaka reads the entire *Gītā*, keeping his attention fixed from beginning to end, but does not follow any of its teaching in actual conduct. He intonates the verse:—

देवद्विजगुरुप्राज्ञपूजनं शौचमार्जवम् ।
ब्रह्मचर्यमहिंसा च शारीरं तप उच्यते ॥

(*Gītā* XVII. 14)

He understands that the verse says, "The worship of gods, Brāhmaṇas, elders and the wise, purity, straightness, continence and non-violence—these are called austerity of the body"; but this is only intellectual understanding, so long as he does not actually reduce the teaching into practice. A fourth friend reads only a single verse, but expresses it in conduct to the very letter. In this circumstance, it will be quite proper to say that the Sādhaka who reduces the teachings into conduct will derive 700 times more benefit than the one who knows only the meaning of the verses, and more than 4,90,000 times benefit than the reader who does his work mechanically as slave labour. This clearly shows a world of difference, indeed ! The benefit which may not be

derived by the reader who reads with understanding of the meaning, many times more than that may be gained in the course of a single day by one, who harbours the teachings at heart.

Mere reading of the *Gītā* also is no doubt conducive to good, for the Lord says:—

अध्येष्यते च य इमं धर्म्यं संवादमावयोः ।
ज्ञानयज्ञेन तेनाहमिष्टः स्यामिति मे मतिः ॥

(*Gītā* XVIII. 70)

"O Arjuna, he who shall study this sacred dialogue of ours, by him shall I be worshipped through the sacrifice of wisdom. Such is My mind."

Thus, he will no doubt gain the favour of the Lord in the form of salvation, but in the case of one who holds the teachings at heart, even a single verse may bring salvation. If not the whole Gītā, one should without fail read at least a chapter of it in the course of the day. In this manner, he who completes twenty-four readings of the book, performs twenty-four sacrifices of Knowledge in the course of a year. One who is ignorant of the alphabet may be qualified to attain salvation, if he only hears the teachings of the *Gītā* and reduces them into practice. The Lord says:—

अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वान्येभ्य उपासते ।
तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥

(*Gītā* XIII.25)

"Others, however, not knowing thus, take to worship by hearing from others; and they, too, who are thus intent on hearing, transcend death."

Many persons hear discourses on the *Gītā* everyday, but mere hearing will not do. We should form the resolution from this very day that regulating our conduct in every way, we shall try to reform our lives according to the teachings of the *Gītā*. So far as attainment of qualifications for reaching the higher regions is concerned, even a hearer, who hears with reverence, gains it. For the Lord says:—

श्रद्धावाननसूयश्च शृणुयादपि यो नरः ।
सोऽपि मुक्तः शुभाँल्लोकान्प्राप्नुयात्पुण्यकर्मणाम् ॥

(*Gītā* XVIII. 71)

"The man who listens to it full of faith and in an uncarping spirit, freed from evil, even he shall gain the happy worlds of the virtuous."

Therefore, everyone should at the least close the gates of the Lord of Death (Yama) against him through hearing of the *Gītā*.

Now, a few words on the practice of Sandhyā. Practice of worship in the form of Sandhyā done with reverence, love and care may lead to the uplift of the soul through destruction of all sins. Every individual of the twice-born class should perform Sandhyā in the morning, at noon and, again, in the evening, with reverence, love and care. If the practice cannot be continued three times a day, the morning and evening Sandhyā should be performed without fail as a compulsory duty. A twice-born, who does not perform Sandhyā, is liable to atone for his lapse and regarded as good as a Śūdra. Men of the twice-born class should never give up their Sandhyā. Worship of God performed at the end of the night and beginning of the day is morning Sandhyā, and Sandhyā performed at the end of the day and beginning of the night is known as evening Sandhyā. Performance of Sandhyā according to rules just at the proper time is performance with care. As a seed sown at the proper time alone is productive of benefit, even so Sandhyā performed at the time definitely allotted to it brings the best result. A Seed sown in a field at the improper time does not, in the first instance, sprout, and if it does sprout, it is not sufficiently productive. Therefore, we should be diligent in performing Sandhyā just at the proper time, observing all its rules. Morning Sandhyā performed when the stars are in the sky is best, performance after the disappearance of the stars is middling, and when performed after sunrise, it is considered least of merit.

उत्तमा तारकोपेता मध्यमा लुप्ततारका ।
कनिष्ठा सूर्यसहिता प्रातःसन्ध्या त्रिधा स्मृता ॥

(*Devī Bhāgavata* XI. xvi. 4)

If it is asked, why is the Sun given prominence in this worship, the answer is that of all manifested gods there is none who is superior to the Sun, and in the beginning of creation it is God Himself who is manifested as the Sun. That is why worship of the Sun is equivalent to worship of God. Again, why is performance of

Sandhyā at the proper time considered so highly meritorious? In answer to this our humble submission is that the Sun is the greatest of all great persons. When he approaches our land, it is our supreme duty to give him a welcome. A welcome offered at the proper time is considered to be the best. For instance, when a great soul comes to visit us for conferring some good, many friends go to the station to offer him a welcome. Some of them reaching there before make all the necessary arrangements for the reception and await the arrival of the train. As soon as the guest alights, they heartily welcome him by offering him garlands and obeisances. A second class of people assemble at the platform at the time of arrival of the train and joining the early comers help in their activities of offering the welcome. A third class of people go to the guest at his resting place two hours after his arrival and welcome him with obeisances etc. Among these three classes of people, the reception given by the first is best, that given by the second is middling, and that of the third class is considered to be least in merit. The welcome given to the Sun-god at the time of the morning Sandhyā should be differentiated according to this analogy.

With regard to evening Sandhyā, the best time of performance is considered to be before the Sun is set, performance after setting of the Sun is middling, and that done after the appearance of the stars is the lowest of merit.

उत्तमा सूर्यसहिता मध्यमा लुप्तभास्करा ।
कनिष्ठा तारकोपेता सायंसन्ध्या त्रिधा स्मृता ॥

(*Devī Bhāgavata* XI. xvi.5)

The reason for this is just as when a great soul arrives the welcome given to him at the proper time is considered best, even so when he departs the honour done to him at the time of departure is regarded as best. When an honoured person after doing some good leaves, many friends follow him to the station to show him respect and bid him farewell. Some friends go to the station late and misses him there. Therefore, they write to him expressing regret and thereby show him their reverence and love. A third friend when he hears that the Mahātmā is due to depart does not go to the station and expresses his love for the Mahātmā

only by a letter in which he gives the reason for his absence at the station. Among these three classes of people, the respect and love shown by the first class is best, that shown by the second class is middling, and that of the third class is regarded as the least of merit. Even so, when Sandhyā is performed before the setting of the Sun, the respect shown to the Sun is the best form of respect, when it is done after Sun-set, the respect shown is middling, and after the appearance of the stars, it is regarded as the least of merit.

Giving up carelessness and indifference all the rites should be performed with eagerness and attention, understanding the rules relating to cleansing (मार्जन), sipping of water (आचमन), and restraining of breath (प्राणायाम) etc., and the Mantra should be uttered with reverence, correctly and clearly, remembering the Ṛṣi (sage), metre, presiding deity and understanding the subject mentioned in the application of the Mantra (विनियोग), uttered before every Mantra. It is necessary also to understand the utility of the utterance of the Mantra or verse. For instance:—

ॐ अपवित्रः पवित्रो वा सर्वावस्थां गतोऽपि वा।
यः स्मरेत्पुण्डरीकाक्षं स बाह्याभ्यन्तरः शुचिः॥

(*Vāmana Purāṇa* XXXIII.6)

Uttering the above verse, we cleanse the body for both internal and external purification. The point to consider here is, is the body purified through utterance of the Mantra or through the cleansing rite (मार्जन) with water? Consideration of the subject will make it clear that the main idea is different from both these acts. The idea is that through the remembrance of Puṇḍarīkākṣa (God) man becomes both externally and internally pure and this is the meaning of the verse. If that is so, it may be asked what is the necessity for the utterance of the Mantra and performance of the cleansing rite? The answer to this is, the object of utterance of the verse is to emphasize the great merit of remembrance of God, and the 'Mārjana' rite points to the need of purification. Sandhyā should be performed with proper understanding in this manner of the meaning and intention of all the Mantras, verses and their application (विनियोग). When getting the auspicious sight of the Sun, or meditating on Him, or offering Him water

for the washing of hand, we should understand that we are seeing God Himself and offering Him welcome. Thus properly understanding every point we should feel ourselves merged in Love at every step and maintain the firm faith in our mind that through continued performance of worship of the Sun with love and care and in proper time, we shall through His grace certainly succeed in reaching the Supreme Abode of God. For worship done by a loving and faithful worshipper will certainly obtain a hearing. In the *Īśopaniṣad* it is stated that the worshipper at the time of death prays to the Sun for opening the passage to the Supreme Abode of God:—

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।
तत्त्वम्पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥

(*Mantra* 15)

"O sun, your face in the form of Truth is covered by a golden lid which kindly remove, so that I may see you as Brahma, whose nature is Truth."

This prayer offered by the worshipper, who performs worship with reverence, love and care, is alone granted.

It is, indeed, quite reasonable that when a servant serves his master with reverence and love, the latter if he is a man of high principles will, according to his capacity and power, undoubtedly do the servant some good in return. Then, what doubt can be there about the spiritual good of the worshipper, who renders worship to the sun with reverence and devotion ?

The story of the *Mahābhārata* is famous that Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira sought to take to heaven even a dog devoted to him. Then, if the Sun helps us in our spiritual uplift there is nothing to wonder at it.

Therefore, those who entertain the desire to attain supreme peace within the shortest time possible should, while making the best use of their time, earnestly and resolutely take to their spiritual practices on the lines stated above.

The Glory of Disinterestedness

Just as constant remembrance of God has been declared to be an easy and quick means of crossing the ocean of birth and death *(Gītā* XII.7; VIII.14); even so, disinterested action also is a quick and easy means *(Gītā* V.6) of doing the same. And if together with disinterestedness, there happens to take place remembrance of God as well, nothing could be better. Like fragrance in gold, it becomes an exceptionally rare and glorified thing. Such combination, indeed, may bring blessedness all the more quicker. But if, even without the remembrance of God, man goes on doing action in a disinterested spirit, renouncing the attachment for fruit, he may attain spiritual good. Such renunciation of fruit has been declared to be even superior to meditation. The Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद् ध्यानं विशिष्यते।
ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥

(XII. 12)

"Knowledge is better than practice (carried on without proper insight), meditation is superior to knowledge, and renunciation of the fruit of actions is even superior to meditation; for peace immediately follows from renunciation."

Therefore, the point of endeavour should be that even while pursuing remembrance of God all actions are performed disinterestedly. If, however, practice of remembrance is not possible when one is engaged in doing action, man can attain supreme good even through the cultivation of disinterestedness. Hence the spirit of disinterestedness should be cultivated with a determined heart; for even a small amount of action done in a disinterested spirit liberates one from the ocean of birth and death. In the *Gītā* the Lord says:—

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥

(II.40)

"In this path (of disinterested action) there is no loss of effort, nor is there fear of contrary result. Even a little practice of this discipline protects one from great fear (of birth and death)."

When such is the case what doubt can be entertained about the attainment of blessedness by one who devotes himself to the constant practice of disinterested action ?

Therefore, totally abandoning thirst, wish, craving, desire, attachment, mineness and egotism etc., man should devote his body, mind and wealth to doing what may lead to the supreme good of all.

Although possessed of wife, child, wealth, pomp, honour, greatness etc., when man craves for more and more of them, it is called 'Tṛṣṇā' or thirst. For instance, the possessor of a bank balance of one lakh desires that it should be raised to five lakhs; when the target of five lakhs is reached, he begins to long for ten lakhs. The growth and aggravation of craving gradually in this manner is termed 'Tṛṣṇā' or thirst. One may possess this type of 'thirst' for honour, greatness, progeny etc. It is an extremely undesirable thing, which leads to man's downfall and degradation.

The desire which is entertained for making up deficiency in the possession of wife, child, wealth and pomp etc., is called 'Icchā', or wish. For example, a man possesses all other things, but lacks a child; now the desire nursed by him in the mind for the possession of a child is termed 'Icchā', or wish.

The desire for making up deficiency is not there, and yet there is a longing for things which are indispensable—things without which life appears unbearable. It is called 'Spṛhā', or craving. For instance, a man is suffering from hunger or from cold; the desire that springs up in his mind at that stage for either food or for clothes is called 'Spṛhā' or craving.

A mind may be free from thirst, wish, craving etc., and yet there may be an underlying thought in it that though additional

things are unnecessary, things which are already obtained may continue to exist, the body may continue to exist— all these ideas are termed 'Vāsanā' or desire.

Among these different forms of desire, the one succeeding is comparatively subtler and finer than the one which precedes, and when the subtler and finer desire is destroyed, the destruction of the grosser and coarser one may be regarded as included in the same. A truly disinterested person is he, who is wholly free from thirst, wish, craving, desire and all other forms of longing.

The root of all these forms of desire is 'attachment'. The mind's affection for the body, enjoyment, wife, child, wealth, glory, honour, fame etc., is called 'attachment'. The idea with regard to the body and worldly objects that 'This is mine' is called 'mineness'. He who is free from both 'attachment' and 'mineness' is the supreme possessor of absence of desire, in other words, of indifference towards the world, and dispassion. The root of 'mineness' and 'attachment', again, is egotism. The identification of the mind with the gross, subtle and causal bodies, which are nonself, and the thought with regard to them that 'I am the body' is called 'egotism'. When this is destroyed, all evils are destroyed; that is to say, when the root of talle evils 'egotism' is destroyed, 'attachment', 'mineness' etc., get automatically eradicated. The main root, again, of all the evils based on egotism is Ignorance (Nescience). That Ignorance so much permeates everyone of our acts and all objects of the world at every step that misled by it we are wandering in the maze of the world. Ignorance is destroyed through attainment of the true knowledge of God. And true knowledge of God is attained through the purification of the heart. Evils like attraction and hatred, falsehood, hypocrisy, theft etc., make our heart impure. The means of the removal of this impurity is adoration of God, or disinterested action.

Inasmuch as we suffer from acute selfishness, the selfish instinct awakens in us at every step when we proceed to do any action. But he who is anxious for his spiritual good should never entertain the desire of serving any personal, selfish interest through God, the celestial gods, sages, saints, men or even

through any animate or inanimate being of this world. Whenever any selfish thought arises in the mind, it should be at once removed and in its place the thought should be cultivated that all may attain good. Just as a greedy man, a slave of money, from the moment he opens his shop till it is closed for the day, when doing every act, entertains the desire, and attempts, to earn money and amass wealth, even so the aspirant of spiritual good, when doing every act, should entertain the thought of doing good to the world. He who, without any idea of his own good, devotes his body, mind and wealth, from a sense of duty, for the good of all, is alone a disinterested, unselfish person, in the true sense of the term.

But it is much to be deplored that due to selfishness we have been so much blinded by ignorance that far from doing good to others in a disinterested spirit, we seek only to serve our own selfish ends through others, and actually make others pander to our self-interest. The amount of selfishness we observe today was not present in the world even a few years before—let alone such ages as the Dvāpara, Tretā and Satya ! Nowadays people do not feel any hesitation to practise falsehood, hypocrisy, theft, dishonesty and treachery etc., for serving their own self-interest, and go to the length of denying even God and Religion for the same purpose. Under this circumstance, how can man expect to attain good in the spiritual sense of the term ?

That which rightfully belongs to another, when coveted, should naturally produce a sense of shame. But instead of this, we attempt to misappropriate the same. This is extremely bad. A thing belonging to another as a matter of right should be looked down with indifference. Far from appropriating it, such appropriation, indeed, should be treated as a sin, just as touching another's wife is a sin. He who either appropriates another's wife and wealth, or covets the same, and defames another, can never expect to attain spiritual good. There will be no room for him even in hell.

Nowadays there has been such a great increase in fraud in the field of business, that we find people always ready to misapprop-

riate another's wealth. We may call this either theft or robbery. When a trader sells a thing, he always tries to deceive the purchaser by giving him less through shortage in weight etc. Things like jute, betel-nut, cotton, wool etc., are made artificially heavier in weight by spraying water in them, and while selling a thing every attempt is made to cheat the purchaser in weight, measure and number; but while purchasing a thing the same trader tries to take himself as much as possible in weight, measure and number. A sample is shown during negotiation for a transaction, but the actual commodity supplied falls far short of it. Adulteration of things—such as, mixing of vegetable oil in clarified butter, white oil in cocoanut oil, dust in pulse etc., is widely practised. Thus serving his own self-interest by cheating people in every way, he spoils his prospect in the other world. Some businessmen when they get an opportunity of appropriating things belonging to the Government, the Railway or the Military Department, try to practise fraud on them. Actually purchasing a small quantity of stock, they take away many times more than what they purchase through collusion with officers. This is theft from beginning to end. Such action, indeed, cannot be too strongly condemned.The evil should be wholly avoided at all costs.

The seeker of spiritual good should do all his acts in a disinterested spirit. Worship and service of God and the celestials, of Ṛsis and Munis, saints and sages, and practices of sacrifice, charity, Japa, ascesis, residence in sacred places, observance of vows, service of the elders, the distressed, the orphan and afflicted beings etc., and every other virtuous deed should be done disinterestedly regarding it as duty, and being freed from the sentiments of mineness, attachment and egotism, and not for the satisfaction of any desire, or with the motive of warding off misfortune. If, however, social exigencies demand, and an optional duty is performed for a particular object freed from attraction and repulsion, and for the sake of public good, it will not be regarded as an action done with interested motive.

Before performing the virtuous deeds enumerated above, there may be entertainment of the desire that on the satisfaction of a

particular object such and such a deed will be performed, but better than this is the action of one who even while performing the virtuous deed keeps the satisfaction of the desire as the goal in view, and better still than this is the action of one, who, after the performance of the virtuous deed, prays to God, the celestials and saints etc., described above that the object of his heart may be fulfilled and superior to even this last is the action of one who does not perform the virtuous deed directly for the satisfaction of a particular desire, but when faced with a calamity, he prays to God for warding it off. But superior to even this is the Sādhaka who devotes himself to virtuous deeds only for his spiritual growth, and the best of all is he who performs those deeds in a disinterested spirit, regarding them as duty, and does not accept anything in return, even though God may offer him anything unasked. This statement, however, is qualified by the fact that if for the pleasure of God, the Sādhaka should accept anything freed from attraction and repulsion, no harm will accrue from it.

In the same way, the desire for serving self-interest should not be nursed even from material objects. For instance, use of medicine sanctioned by the scriptures for the cure of ailments, food for the satisfaction of hunger, water for the removal of thirst and cloth for the prevention of cold etc., may naturally produce either a favourable or unfavourable sensation on the mind, but even these things should be made use of only disinterestedly freeing the mind from dual impulses like attraction and repulsion, joy and grief etc. If at any time a favourable sensation produces attraction and joy, and an unfavourable sensation produces repulsion and grief, it should be taken for granted that desire lies hidden in the mind.

Personal service from others should in no way be accepted at any time; on the contrary, it is proper to render service to others, as far as possible, through body, mind and wealth, but such service should never be accepted from others. During period of illness, if non-acceptance of service from wife, child, servant, friends and relatives causes them misery and mental suffering, under that circumstance the minimum amount of service taken

from them for their satisfaction does not fall under the category of desire-born action.

While accepting dowry, people try to grab to the maximum extent, and if the giver does not give according to their demand, they renounce relationship with him. Impartially considered, dowry is a form of gift. Regarding it as a gift, maximum renunciation should be practised with regard to it. The desire for giving dowry may be entertained, but not for taking it. Where, however, non-acceptance makes the relative dissatisfied, acceptance of the minimum quantity would not mean gratification of desire.

Similarly, nothing should be accepted from any organization or from any individual. If, however, one is compelled by circumstances to accept anything from anybody, he should make every attempt to give in return before, or at the time of taking, or after taking the thing, a better and more valuable thing than taken by him.

In former days, let alone the Brahmacārī, the Vānaprasthī and the Saṁnyāsī, even the householder was not required to ask for any kind of help from anybody; on occasions of marriage and other ceremonies requiring expenditure, his friends and relatives used to send him unasked whatever was required by him, and felt gratified and delighted by rendering this help. In case they lacked any particular thing, they would voluntarily take it from their friends and acquaintances; and send it to him. Renunciation of selfishness was the prime cause of this form of co-operative action.

Therefore, if we also adopt unselfishness and generous renunciation as the motives of our behaviour towards others, the golden age will be present with us even today.That is to say, as in ancient days, so even today all our requirements may be fulfilled without our asking for the same. Hence we should never extend our hand for anything. Nor should we entertain the desire and hope that things will be given to us by anybody unasked. And in spite of the lack of this desire, if anything is given to us, the desire to keep it is also a form of desire. And when even in the face of lack of desire, something is forced on us, and we feel a sense of

pleasure in accepting the same, it indicates nothing but a hidden form of desire. Therefore, though tried by the worst of circumstances we should never accept for our own personal gain either service from another, or right of possession over other's things, and remain absolutely resolute in our determination. Firmness should never be given up, even if life has to be sacrificed—let alone the sacrifice of honour or physical suffering ! But unfortunately we have been overtaken by such faint-heartedness that even the least amount of suffering is sufficient to shake us from our resolve. What to speak of the fundamental urges of desire, even for an ordinary thing we do not hesitate to beg of others. Under the circumstance, how is it possible to attain success in the practice of disinterested action ?

It should, however, be remembered that if a Brahmacārī or a Saṁnyāsī begs for food, such begging is no part of interested action. The Brahmacārī begs for the sake of the Guru alone, and whatever the Guru gives him out of what he secures by begging, he accepts as consecrated food, and the Saṁnyāsī begs for the Guru as well as for himself, and if he has no Guru, he may beg for himself alone; for begging has been prescribed as a duty for him. And if he receives alms unasked, the acceptance of the same by him is equivalent to the acceptance of nectar. Such alms, whether secured through begging, or received unasked, should also be taken freeing oneself of attraction and repulsion.

Alms should not be accepted where it is given with great welcome, or with special feeling of adoration; for acceptance of alms there, may lead to the inflation of the ego. Nor should it be taken where it is given disrespectfully, for there the giver gives with a sense of pain; hence such alms is not acceptable. Therefore, alms which is received freed from honour and dishonour, praise and blame, and from ideas, such as, 'this tastes bad', 'this tastes good', and then from attraction for what is favourable and repulsion for what is unfavourable—is, indeed, equivalent to nectar. In this also a thing prohibited by the scripture, or what is unacceptable to the mind, may be rejected. For instance, alcohol, meat, egg, garlic, onion etc., when offered in alms should be properly given up

regarding them as prohibited food. And milk, clarified butter, dry fruits and sweets etc., though sanctioned by the scriptures and congenial to health, may appear uncongenial to the mind due to strong dispassion, and hence no harm will accrue if they are given up. When it is necessary, the Brahmacārī and the Saṁnyāsī may beg for their loin-cloth, water-pot and cloth for protection against cold. There is no harm in such begging.

Austerities and penance etc., for the Vānaprasthī; officiating as priest in sacrifice and imparting of learning etc., for the Brāhmaṇa; protection of the people and participation in a righteous war * for the Kṣatriya; agriculture and trade for the Vaisya; and personal service for women and the Śūdra—all these duties prescribed by the scriptures should be performed disinterestedly, without attraction and repulsion, joy and grief for either their performance or non-performance, or for their fruits. If it is detected that success in such action leads to joy or pleasure, and failure leads to grief or repulsion, it should be understood that desire as motive is hidden behind that action.

Therefore, entirely renouncing desire, attachment, mineness and egotism etc., man should carry out disinterestedly for public good from a sense of duty all actions prescribed by the scriptures. When he does so, he will be naturally freed from all evil qualities and evil conduct and there will be an influx in him of virtues like discrimination and dispassion, reverence and faith, mind-control and sense-control etc., and attaining purity his mind will become so very fearless that the greatest of misfortune and danger will fail to shake him; he will become, as if, an ocean of composure, heroism and gravity, and realize God, the embodiment of supreme peace and supreme bliss.

* The Lord says in the *Gītā:*—

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ। ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि॥

(II.38)

"Treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, get ready for the fight, then; fighting thus you will not incur sin."

Even-Mindedness is Nectar and Uneven-Mindedness is Poison

In a remote village in Rājapūtānā, there lived a fellow belonging to the Vaiśya community, who suffered from extreme penury. As ill-luck would have it, in one particular year, the area was visited by a dire famine. People began to die like flies due to want of food. The indigent Vaiśya also suffered from acute distress. For a few days he struggled hard against the adverse circumstances. But, finally, finding no means there to maintain his family, he scraped together the last resources for it, and himself went out in search of livelihood. He had a friend of early childhood, who had been very intimate with him. This friend had established himself as a trader in Āsāma. He had amassed great wealth, and was a very successful trader. The indigent Vaiśya remembered him, and reflecting that the mark of a friend was that 'in times of need, his affection would increase hundredfold,' he reached distant Āsāma by some means or other. Arriving at the town where his friend carried on business, he interviewed the latter. He had been confident that the friend would welcome him and his days of suffering would therefore come to an end. The friend no doubt extended him verbal welcome, but there was no joy in his appearance, which instead showed marks of internal irritation, and a sense of heaviness on his bosom. The poor Vaiśya was extremely distressed. Giving a brief account of his sufferings in words appropriate to move a heart, he begged for shelter. He said, "Brother, at my home, your sister-in-law and her children must be faced with immediate starvation and a remittance should be sent to them urgently today. And some work should be found for me, so that I may somehow pass these difficult days and send some money regularly every month for the children."

Drawing a long breath, the opulent friend replied—"Brother, what you say is no doubt true. I ought to render you service in this crisis; but unfortunately my income is not large enough that I may be of help to you. And with regard to work, I am sorry, there is nothing which I can offer. I may be getting in all 40 to 50 thousand rupees annually out of interest, rent of houses and the outturn of business. But you know that in these days of high cost of living, one has to spend according to one's position in society. There are the heavy household expenses; and accountants and clerks have to be maintained. It is with difficulty that I make two ends meet. Under the circumstances, where shall I get the means to maintain you and your family? I am, indeed, very sorry to say this—but circumstances compel me to do so—that I am incapable of coming to your aid in any way at the present moment. Please try to think out some other course."

Sad and dejected in spirit, the poor Vaiśya said—"Brother! I know no other person in this place, and came only expecting to receive your patronage. Moreover, my expenses are not likely to involve any extraordinary amount. Fifty rupees may be sent immediately to my home in Rājapūtānā, and if I get some work which will fetch me, say, fifty to sixty rupees per month, I shall be able to manage my affairs. I shall spend a portion of it over myself, and what will be left I shall send for the children. Having an income of fifty thousand or more, this should not appear as a great burden to you, specially when I seek to live upon my honest labour." As he uttered this, tears began to flow through his eyes. The unsympathetic words of his friend came as a rude shock to him. The opulent friend looked at the appearance of the man in tears, but his heart remained unmoved. With mock humility, he repeated—"Brother! What you say is, no doubt, true; but I am quite helpless. You must think out some other plan. Of course, for a day or two, till you have found out an occupation, you may stay with me. You will get your food in my own kitchen. Please go, wash yourself, and take your bath. The food is perhaps ready by now." Saying this, the opulent friend turned his attention to his own business. Who knows oppressed with what thoughts—

the poor Vaiśya went out for his wash and bath !

Endowed as the opulent friend was with a hard and niggardly nature, his termagant wife far excelled him in both these qualities. She could not tolerate the presence of a second person. Out of civility, the husband had to practise some amount of tolerance in certain cases, but the wife used even to take the husband to task. Common courtesy demanded that a friend of early life should be properly entertained. Going to the inner quarters, he said to his wife—"An old friend of mine has come from Rājapūtānā. He has to be fed today. Some nice dishes should be prepared for him and he should be served with proper courtesy and respect. Over and above being a friend, he is our guest." He had heard about the traditional regard for entertainment of guests. Lest the wife be overtaken by petulance at the very mention of the proposition, he placed the above argument before her. But it produced no effect on the fair lady. Thoroughly upset, she harshly retorted—"To hell with your friend and your guest! I am going to be blinded, blowing the fuel in your kitchen! A guest today, tomorrow a friend, a trader on the third day—there is no end to this chain of botheration ! I am fed up with this sort of household life. I cannot serve these outsiders, please make some other arrangement for them." Somewhat taken aback, the husband whispered—"Please, lower the pitch of your voice. He is standing just outside the door. If he hears what you say, he will feel greatly distressed." Angrily she replied—"That will be better still; it will bring the trouble to an early end." Praising the wife for her far-sight, the husband somewhat brought her round, and said—"Look here! I have already told him that I cannot provide him with any work, and that he must discover some means of livelihood himself. He will go away in the course of a day or two. In the interest of our prestige, he should be tolerated for these days and served with food." The wife at last agreed, and prepared food; but all the same her heart continued to rankle because of the painful duty.

When the food was ready, and the opulent trader reached the female quarters with his indigent friend, his wife said—"Let your

friend take food first. For scriptural rule demands that the guest should be fed first. You may take your meal afterwards." The husband meekly acquiesced in this, and the guest was fed with sumptuous dishes. Sweet rice boiled in milk, soft cakes fried in ghee, curds and varieties of vegetable curries were served to the guest; but there was no pleasure or sweetness in the appearance of the host and the hostess. Instead, their look was overcast with palpable rudeness and sorrow. It appeared, as if, they were passing through an ordeal, and were being forced to do all this without their internal consent. The poor guest silently ate all the courses, but derived no happiness when he saw their long faces. After taking food, he had to go out for making water. In the meantime, the lady of the house served food for her husband. In the dish served to the husband there were some additional courses which were not given to the guest. The poor soul entering, again, to wash his hands and feet, though not intending to do so, accidentally cast his look on that dish. He noticed that it contained Halavā prepared of almond. There was a cup containing thick cream of milk and another containing the cream of curd. Fine pan cakes of the best quality were smeared over with fresh butter. Fresh courses of cauliflower and Paravala and pickles of various kinds were served on this dish. He clearly understood that because of this differential treatment, his friend did not sit for dinner with him. It increased his agony all the more, and quietly washing his hands he went out of the inner apartments.

At night the opulent trader asked his wife, "Where is the bed to be arranged for the guest?" Peevishly the wife replied, "Let the cot be placed on my head ! Is this a proper question to ask? Let the bed be arranged where it may be convenient. Has he not stretched himself since intrusion under this roof?" The husband, taking the hint, said, "All-right ! He will sleep on the mattress in the office room! But that room is infested with swarms of mosquitoes, and the fellow will not be able to sleep. It will be nice if you can lend him a mosquito-net for at least two days." Sharply she replied, "I have got only one net with me, and this you can

either use yourself or throw at his head." The trader being acquainted with his wife's nature, considered it inadvisable to lengthen the discussion, so quietly coming to the office-room, he told his friend, "Brother! there are mattresses in this room as well as pillows. You can sleep here at night. This will be convenient for you." The poor soul humbly consented to do this. The trader retired to his bed-room, and his guest lay down there. It was a sultry summer night. In addition to mosquitoes, there were innumerable bugs in the room. As soon as the poor fellow stretched his weary length, they attacked him from all sides. The night was passed in catching and throwing out bugs, and driving away the mosquitoes. The poor soul could not sleep undisturbed even for half-an-hour in the course of the night.

The next morning, coming out of that residence, he proceeded to the market. As soon as he reached the cross-road, he saw an old acquaintance of his own village. The co-villager also espied him simultaneously. This co-villager was indeed extremely poor, but was possessed of a large heart. Noticing the newcomer from a distance, he ran up to him and with overflowing love and pleasure, asked, "When did you arrive here, brother? You sent me no information about your arrival! You must have suffered, indeed, a lot of trouble! If you had only informed me, I could have awaited you at the station! You sent me no word even after reaching this place! Please tell me—where you are putting up? Pray come at once to my humble cottage. I shall bring your luggage later on. Oh, it is a great fortune that I meet you here. In a distant place like this, it is, indeed, a rare privilege to meet a friend coming from our own village."

Hearing these words saturated with true love, the heart of that poor soul literally melted. He found great consolation from them. It was, as if, a drowning man suddenly met with some support. Describing the circumstances which forced him to come here, he said, "My baggage consists of only a second piece of cloth, a towel, a small carpet and a water-pot. These I left in that house of the big trader." The poor acquaintance said, "He is, indeed, a very rich man! If you have love for me, you should come to my

cottage. You will live there as comfortably as in your own home. Whatever poor fare we prepare, you will eat with pleasure in your heart. I work as a small broker for stray goods and earn at least two rupees a day. I work single-handed. If you join me, we shall be two, working together. Our work will increase twofold and the income also will be double, if not more. It is honest labour and truthful business. The more we work, the more we shall gain. Fifty rupees you will immediately remit to your home. We shall try even for more. Please do not lose your heart. Poor as we are, God will, indeed, help us to stand on our feet. I have already a reserve of fifty rupees with me. Please send it to your wife today." Saying this, he escorted the co-villager to his cottage. It was a small mud-built cottage with roof of iron sheets. Reaching there, he at once took out his reserve of fifty rupees, and sent the amount to his friend's house by a money order. What happiness and hope this one act gave to the famine-stricken, suffering soul cannot be properly described. The two friends went together to the rich man's house and took away the things which had been left there.

Returning home, the co-villager said to his wife—"A gentleman has come from our distant land. He is an old acquaintance of mine. Please prepare food for him." Delighted at heart, the devoted lady replied—"We are, indeed, lucky that a friend from our distant village has visited us today. We are thankful to God for this opportunity of serving a good friend." With a loving heart, she prepared food. Maize does not grow in Āsāma. Rice was selling cheap at that time. Coarse rice, a dish of ordinary vegetables, coarse bread and buttermilk—these were the courses she prepared. She served the food at the same time both to her husband and to the guest, without any discrimination. There was difference only in one respect, viz., that she pressed food, again and again, with great affection on the dish of the honoured guest. The guest was highly satisfied with the food. He felt supreme happiness in his mind. The joy which coarse and unbuttered bread offered with love gives can never be derived from rich food, offered without love. After dinner and rest, both

of them started work in the shop.

At night, for the rest of his honoured guest, the poor shop-keeper placed an old, rickety cot, the body of which was woven with ropes of grass, which he had purchased for three rupees. A piece of sack-cloth was laid on it. In order to save him from the bite of mosquitoes, his wife fixed up four poles in four corners of the cot and put on them an old covering-sheet of hers made of fine yarn. The famine-stricken friend had had no rest the foregoing night. As soon, therefore, as he lay down on the cot, he went into deep slumber. He had complete rest throughout the night and all his fatigue disappeared.

After three or four days, that famine-stricken newcomer accidentally met his wealthy friend on the public road. Out of formal courtesy, the latter enquired, "How, now? Have you got some work? Where do you stay? Do you get food properly?" He replied—"Thanks, I have got the very best arrangement. I am staying with so-and-so of our village. Both my friend and his wife are the very personifications of goodness. He has allotted to me half the share of his shop. He remitted fifty rupees that very day for my wife and children, and has given me assurance that I should no more worry about food, which I would take with him, and that he would also arrange to remit at least fifty rupees a month for the maintenance of my children. The arrangement he has made for my board and lodging is most unexceptionable. The food I take there tastes as nectar and gives me great satisfaction indeed. His treatment is so highly loving and even-minded that I can never forget it even in a life-time."

Hearing these words of genuine gratitude of the sufferer, the rich trader felt as if his pride was pricked. But the words were literally true. He had full knowledge what treatment he had extended to his old friend. What could he say in extenuation of his conduct? One thought, however, crossed his mind. He was proud of the fact that in his household the choicest dishes were prepared. He possessed a well furnished house, adorned with mattresses, cushions, bolsters and pillows, with chandeliers and

glass-shades hanging here and there. The poor shop-keeper could never think of possessing such things. Therefore, in order to show off himself, and intending to decry the shop-keeper, he said—"What food do you get there? Coarse rice, unbuttered bread, leafy vegetables, and as for bed either the bare earth, or an old, half-broken bedstead! What more does that worthless fellow possess? Leaving the rich dishes and well-furnished rooms of my house you have gone there—you must be repenting now for this." With a smile on his lips, the sufferer replied—"Friend! there is no doubt that you are a man of wealth. You have in your house mattresses and bolsters chandeliers and glass-shades. Your house is well-furnished. You eat also rich dishes. But what is all that for me? I found neither pleasure in eating at your place, nor rest during the night. I had to spend the whole night fighting against mosquitoes and bugs and sleep had totally disappeared. The present bed-stead of grass-ropes, bed of sack-cloth and the mosquito-net improvised out of an old covering-sheet are sources of great pleasure to me, inasmuch as I can sleep undisturbed at night. And in what words shall I praise the food I get! The coarse rice, rough bread and leafy vegetables taste so sweet, that I never tasted any food compared to them. The food you supplied to me was as good as poison, and the food I get now is as good as nectar. Your mind was, as if, weighed down. You considered my arrival as a misfortune, and your mind was full of unevenness. There is a saying current among saints that "Uneven-mindedness is poison, and even-mindedness is nectar". Therefore, because of your uneven-mindedness your rich and delicious food got tainted with poison, and due to his even-mindedness his poor dishes become nectar. Not only that, his behaviour also is as sweet as nectar. You have lakhs and lakhs of rupees in your banks and have an income of lakhs, and you are an intimate friend of early childhood; and yet, you neither cared to send any help for my children, actually starving and lamenting for food, nor found any work for me by which I could earn, say, fifty or sixty rupees a month! And that poor shop-keeper, with whom I had only ordinary acquaintance due to our birth in the same village, though

without means himself, gave me shelter, came to my help, sent immediately to my home a remittance of fifty rupees, and has made me an equal partner in his business. Is it ever possible to forget his kindness? And all this he has done not to lay me under obligation by show of kindness. He has done it out of love and a sense of duty. He does not expect any gratitude in return, on the contrary conferring happiness on me he feels thankful himself and becomes happy. His wife also is endowed with equally high and noble sentiments. That is why delight and sprightliness dance on their faces."

The opulent friend asked, "In what respect did you notice discrimination at my place, and want of discrimination at his?" In reply to this, the newcomer said—"You served me with very good dishes; there is no doubt about this. But those dishes became like poison to me. You may remember that under the plea that I was an honoured guest I was made to sit all by myself and take my food. After taking food, I had gone out for making water. Returning for washing my hands and feet, my eyes accidentally fell on the dishes placed before you. I noticed that you were served with sweet Halavā prepared of almond, fresh butter, fine Capātīs, thick creams of milk and curd, cauliflower and other nice vegetables and pickles etc. These dishes were not served to me. I am not particularly fond of these things, but the discrimination showed in the matter of service caused me mental pain. I think it was the intention to serve you specially with these dishes which impelled your wife to put forward the plea of feeding the guest first and feed you alone afterwards. Instead of this, if both of us had been served with food at the same time, what would happen? Your expenses would have only increased a little! But this did not cross your mind at all, and you meekly acquiesced in the proposal of your wife. Is it not a matter of shame to treat a religious friend in this manner? On account of this uneven behaviour, your food was like poison to me.

"Now, look at the behaviour of the other party. He is extremely poor; but his wife, whatever she could arrange—coarse rice, rough bread, leafy vegetables and buttermilk—served us

equally, at the same time and place, and fed us both with equal respect, affection and delight. For my rest at night, he spared the only bedstead he possessed, spread his own poor bedding on it, and improvised a mosquito-net out of a fine covering-cloth to protect me from the attack of mosquitoes. What a great impression this disinterested love of his, and even-minded behaviour, made on me, is known only to myself. That is why I find nectar, and nectar alone there, and remembering his behaviour, every now and then, I feel myself delighted and overwhelmed with joy."

The opulent friend tried to excuse himself by saying—"I suffer from chronic illness. My power of digestion is affected, hence I have been advised by my physician to take these things." But the newcomer replied, "These are not the things prescribed for curing indigestion. But if it were so, what harm would accrue if these things were served on my plate as well?"

The wealthy friend had no answer. Extremely ashamed, he began to repent within for his uneven behaviour and want of love, and left the place with a downcast look.

This is only an imaginary story. We should, however, learn from it that in our dealings with others, we should be guided by the spirit of sacrifice and generosity, permeated with love and humility. In matters of food etc., perfect evenness should be maintained. This does not, however, mean that sitting round a common table with men whose faith, custom and habits of life are different, one should take prohibited food with them. What is intended is only this that to whatever faith or nationality a person may belong, he should be offered welcome and treated with respect without violating scriptural rules, and food prepared in the household should be offered to him with love and humility and without any discrimination, and only after feeding him the host should feed himself. The motive should be absolutely pure; that is to say, not the least sense of unevenness or inequality should be maintained in the mental plane.

How to Meditate on God with Supreme Divine Attributes ?

No other spiritual discipline in this world can compare with meditation on God. Therefore, with faith and love and in a disinterested spirit, one should always and unceasingly meditate on God. Living in seclusion, communion with saints, reading and pondering over the meaning of the real scriptures, Japa of the Divine Name, fixing one's thoughts on the divine essence, mentally dwelling on the divine sports, virtues and glory, knowledge of the truth and mysteries of God, reverence and love for God and an aversion and indifference to the enjoyments of the world—all these are particularly helpful in meditation on God. For repetition of the Divine Name reminds one of the divine essence; thought of the divine essence reminds one of the divine sports; by mentally dwelling on the divine sports one is able to realize God's virtues and glory; by fixing one's thoughts on and ruminating all these one comes to know the truth and secrets of God; knowledge of these in its turn enhances one's faith and love and then developing an aversion and indifference to worldly enjoyments one gets absorbed in meditation on God.

Hence a Sādhaka should meditate on whatever aspect of God he likes most, whether it is God with form or without form, God with attributes or the attributeless Brahma. It is much better if a Sādhaka fixes his thought on God with form and attributes and possessing numberless divine virtues, meditating at the same time on His formless and attributeless aspect. Such meditation alone is meditation on the integral being of the Supreme Person (Puruṣottama). The world has no analogue or parallel, example, metaphor or simile, by means of which this integral being of God can be illustrated. To the inhabitants of a dark region where there is no sun it is not possible to explain with the help of an illustration what the sun is like; for when there is nothing

which can compare with the sun, how can it be possible to illustrate it ? Similarly it is very difficult to illustrate by means of an example the transcendent and inscrutable character of God.

Now, for example, water existing in the rays of the sun in the sky in the causal form of atoms is altogether unmanifest and invisible and cannot be detected with the help of a microscope or any other means. Again, when the same element hangs in the atmosphere in the form of humidity it is still imperceptible, even though its presence can be inferred by reason. And when the same water is condensed as cloud and rain-drops and comes down in the form of hail-stones, it becomes visible and can even be grasped. Water in this visible form can be put to all kinds of uses that water can lend itself to. The analogy of water, however, can hardly apply to God, Who is all-conscious; for while water is material, mutable, perishable, finite and circumscribed, God is altogether different from it—eternal, conscious and unchangeable. Hence that incomparable and infinite God has no analogue or parallel. Nevertheless, the wise invariably take the help of some illustration in order to explain to the best of their ability the truth of God, however partially it may be.

Just as the formless water existing in its unmanifest state manifests itself as humidity, even so it is the formless and attributeless Brahma which appears as the qualified yet formless Divinity, the very embodiment of consciousness and bliss, due to the love and devotion of devotees. Again, just as the same water gets condensed in the form of cloud and rain-drops and frozen into hail-stones, even so the qualified and formless Divine, Who is a vast ocean of transcendent, self-conscious and supremely blissful virtues, manifests Himself first as an infinite mass of effulgence and then in an eternally divine, all-resplendent, qualified and visible form. The very vision of that most loving and pious devotee who is blessed with the sight of that divine form gets divinized. Nay, by His grace, a devotee of God can behold that most divine and marvellous form of God even with his mortal eyes. Blessed with His sight the devotee gets so enraptured that he loses consciousness of his own self. He loses consciousness of

everything other than God and forgets his own existence. Charmed by the sight of that ravishing beauty his eye-lids cease to fall and he goes on drinking it with unwinking eyes. Even on recovering himself the devotee cannot describe that transcendent and charming beauty; for human speech is utterly incapable of describing that enchanting form possessed of infinite and inscrutable divine attributes. How, then, can it be possible for an ordinary human being like me to describe that supremely divine and ravishing beauty even to the hundredth degree? Nevertheless, at the pressing solicitation of some loving friends I venture to write something on this subject. This is, however, sheer audacity on my part and I crave the forgiveness of my critical readers for the same.

Even before the Lord appears in a visible form before the devotee an unbounded, supremely divine and transcendent consciousness, tranquillity, equanimity and joy pervade the atmosphere around him as well as his inner self, viz., his mind, intellect and senses and every particle of his body. It is this qualified, yet formless aspect of God which appears later on in a personal and visible form before the devotee. This divine form of the Lord, who is an embodiment of supreme love and bliss, is most charming, infinitely loving, full of divine nectar, most enjoyable and supremely delightful. By mentally scanning this most charming divine form from head to foot in the reverse order the devotee too becomes the very embodiment of joy, love, charm and immortality. Therefore, in order to be able to behold that all-loving and all-blissful form a devotee should visualize it in the sky before him as below:—

In the atmosphere at a distance of about three cubits from the devotee's eyes stands in all His glory the all-conscious and all-blissful integral Brahma or God Himself in the divinely self-conscious and supremely effulgent, qualified and visible form of Śrī Viṣṇu. He comprises in Himself the aggregate of all beauty and is ever glorious in His infinite glory. Though swarthy as sapphire He sheds all round a divinely pure and brilliant lustre and thus outshines countless suns by His radiant immaculate form

tempered with a slight tinge of blue. That supremely brilliant effulgence, however, is much more soothing even than that of the moon, which is an embodiment of coolness. His graceful figure resembles that of a handsome prince with a height of nearly three and a half cubits and a breadth of about one cubit. The soles of His feet present a rosy appearance and are distinguished by the figures of an ensign, a barley seed, a conch-shell, a discus, a lotus flower, a thunderbolt, a Svastika and so on. His feet and toes are exceptionally bright, soft, smooth and most shapely. The nails of His toes are gleaming like rows of bright moons shedding a peculiar lustre resembling that of heavenly gems. The anklets adorning His ankles are making a jingling sound so sweet and melodious that the moment it enters the ears of the Sādhaka his mind gets absorbed in it and becomes still as if spell-bound. The touch of His soft feet produces a most peculiar sensation, is supremely delightful, most thrilling and extremely enjoyable. Wrapped round His loins is a heavenly, soft and bright yellow silk through which the most brilliant effulgence of His person shines forth. His calves, knees and thighs too are extremely soft, smooth, lustrous and most shapely. The slender and most charming waist of the Lord is encircled by a zone studded with heavenly jewels. His lotus-like navel, the birth-place of Brahmā, is very deep; while His belly is adorned by threefolds and most well-shaped. He has a large, most well-built, extremely charming and broad chest and four arms, two of which are raised upwards while the other two extend downwards reaching up to the knees. The arms are long, exceedingly soft, smooth, shining, most well-built, mighty, round, tapering and extremely handsome. The palms of His hands, which are rosy in colour and exceedingly beautiful, are marked with the figures of a conch-shell, discus, lotus, barley-seed, goad, flag, Svastika and so on, and supremely graceful. The lustre of His finger-nails is most effulgent and exceedingly charming; they shine like so many heavenly gems. The fingers of all His four hands are adorned with gold rings studded with jewels, and His arms with wristlets and armlets. He holds with His lower right hand His most resplendent

club called Kaumodakī and a most lovely lotus in His left; while He holds in His upper right hand His most effulgent discus known by the name of Sudarśana and His most splendid and exceedingly white conch-shell bearing the name of Pāñcajanya in His left. His swarthy neck is adorned with most resplendent necklaces of pearls, jewels and gold as well as with wreaths of basil leaves and heavenly sylvan flowers, which hang up to His knees. Nay, the elegance of His neck, which is as charming as a conch-shell, is further enhanced by a garland of tender leaves and flowers. Hanging on His bosom are a necklace of gold interspersed with jewels, and the most effulgent diamond called Kaustubha, which is shining like the rising sun. In the middle of His chest shines the mark of Śrīvatsa (a symbol of Śrī Lakṣmī) just like the reflection of one's face in a mirror, and above it can be seen the footprint of the sage Bhṛgu. The Lord's shoulders are elevated, and soft; and on the left one hangs crosswise a sacred thread of gold and a red scarf. He has a long shapely neck, while His throat and chin are most lovely. His lips are ruddy like a ripe Bimbā fruit, ruby or coral. His mouth, which resembles a full-blown blue lotus, is beaming with a gentle winsome smile, supreme grace, bright radiance and a most innocent hilarity and reveals His milk-white teeth, which are most elegant and supremely charming like a pair of pearl-strings. The Lord's voice is most lovely, clear, soft and sweet and drops into the ears as nectar. His nose is most captivating. The Lord's cheeks are bright, soft, clear, rosy and most graceful. His most lovely and large ears are adorned with bejewelled gold pendants shaped as alligators and shining as the rising sun, which are reflected on His mirror-like cheeks. The Lord's eyes are most beautiful, large, bright and supremely lustrous and resemble a pair of full-blown lotuses. Looking on the Sādhaka with an intent gaze full of infinite love and compassion, the Lord is unceasingly instilling into him as it were His own virtues of love, compassion, joy, tranquillity, evenness of mind, wisdom etc. And just as all the herbs and plants get surcharged with nectar dropping from the nectarine rays of the full moon, even so the perennial stream of transcendent and

nectarine virtues flowing from the Lord's eyes is saturating every atom of the Sādhaka's mind, senses and body with that divine nectar and pervading the whole atmosphere; and entering into his being and penetrating every pore of it; these virtues are flooding him with infinite consciousness, joy and tranquillity. The Sādhaka is feeling enraptured again and again at the sight of the Lord's lotus face, the fountain-head of all loveliness and joy, and looking intently with unwinking eyes on His beauty alone. The Lord's eyebrows are dark as the bee and describe a large and most beautiful curve indicating His highest goodwill for the entire creation. He has a bright, smooth, broad and supremely beautiful forehead with a most lovely sacred mark painted on it. His head is covered by shining, smooth and dark curly locks strung with heavenly flowers. He is wearing on it a bejewelled and most brilliant heavenly diadem of gold. His lotus face is encircled with exceedingly bright rays of heavenly effulgence resembling sun-beams, and is even more brilliant, beautiful and charming than the autumnal full moon divested of its spot. The Lord's graceful figure is diffusing a heavenly and most delicious fragrance which the Sādhaka is inhaling as nectar. The Lord's sight, speech, touch, thought and conversation with Him— everything is lovely, enjoyable and blissful.

The Lord's graceful person, raiment, ornaments, jewels, weapons and garlands etc., are all divine and self-conscious. The comeliness of the Lord's blessed person is so delightful and soul-captivating that even birds and beasts are enchanted by its sight, to say nothing of human beings. His charming and graceful form puts to shame even the god of love. Nay, His loveliness outvies the beauty of millions of Cupids. The sweetness of His beauty exercises a great charm on the devotee. Its very sight is so enthralling that one would never cease looking at it. The collective beauty of the whole universe would hardly compare with an iota of His loveliness. Nobody can sing the glory of His endearing beauty. Blessed with a loving glance from His eyes a man would get so absorbed in love that he would find it impossible to forget Him; on the other hand, he would ever drink with his eyes the sweetness of

His beauty. To say nothing of directly perceiving His charming beauty, he who beholds the Lord even in a dream would get so absorbed in love that he would not be able to forget Him all his life. That blissful form has such a wonderful charm about it that a devotee would be well-nigh incapable of forgetting it even if it appeared but once before his mental eyes and would never be sated with enjoying that nectarine bliss; on the other hand, he would forget his very existence in the excess of his insatiable greed, and feel enraptured every moment in recalling His excellences again and again.

The Lord is endowed with countless most singular divine virtues such as gentleness, serenity, tenderness, cordiality, agreeability, loveliness, attractiveness, splendour, comeliness, eternal youth, large-heartedness, valour, modesty, freedom from malice, fondness for His devotees, susceptibility to love, redeeming the fallen, all-auspiciousness, oneness with absolute truth, pure consciousness and unmixed bliss, claim to universal adoration appreciation of services, unsurpassable excellence, munificence, religiousness, realization of truth, wisdom, eloquence, knowledge of scriptures, mastery of all languages, politeness of speech, high-mindedness, cleverness, all-captivating sweetness of tongue, protection of the suppliant, protection of the virtues, goodwill for His devotees, steadfastness of vow, learning, intelligence, supreme bliss, affording supreme protection to all, all-perfection, affluence, universal lordship, uncommon and marvellous splendour, exercising fascination on all and miraculous power etc., all in an infinite measure. Over and above the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* also mentions numerous other virtues such as truthfulness, purity, compassion, forbearance etc. Goddess Earth says to Dharma (the god of piety):—"Truthfulness, purity, compassion, forbearance, self-sacrifice, contentment, guilelessness, control of mind and subjugation of the senses, austerity, equanimity, endurance, tranquillity study of the scriptures, knowledge of the Self, dispassion, divine faculties of omnipotence etc., prowess, energy, strength, retentive power, independence, adroitness, brilliance, fortitude, softness, intrepidity, humility, amiability, courage, vigour, strength of will, blessedness, profundity, firmness, piety,

eminence, dignity and freedom from self-conceit—these thirty-nine divine attributes and many other remarkable virtues coveted by men aspiring for greatness constantly reside in Him, ever ready to serve Him, and never leave Him even for a moment."*

The scriptures ascribe many more excellences to the Lord; but endowed as He is with infinite qualities it is never possible to recount them all. All these divine virtues exist in the Lord in their highest and perfect form. If all the tenderness and love pulsating in the heart of all living beings of the world is accumulated, it cannot be compared even with a drop of that ocean of boundless and infinite compassion and affection. Even so all the excellences existing in the countless universes put together cannot be likened even to a drop of that ocean of virtues; for the numberless universes are comprised in an infinitesimal part of God's idea. It is the formless and attributeless aspect of that all-conscious God which appears as God with form and attributes; hence all these attributes are divine and spiritual in essence. Therefore, it is a fraction of these divine and spiritual attributes that is reflected throughout the universe in the form of numberless virtues. Hence it is said that all the excellences existing in the universe cannot compare even with an iota of God's virtues.

God with form and attributes is again twofold in character—He who is qualified by Māyā and He who transcends Māyā. He who is beyond Māyā is altogether devoid of the three modes of Nature—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas; hence His attributes,

---

* सत्यं शौचं दया क्षान्तिस्त्यागः सन्तोष आर्जवम्।
शमो दमस्तपः साम्यं तितिक्षोपरतिः श्रुतम्॥
ज्ञानं विरक्तिरैश्वर्यं शौर्यं तेजो बलं स्मृतिः।
स्वातन्त्र्यं कौशलं कान्तिर्धैर्यं मार्दवमेव च॥
प्रागल्भ्यं प्रश्रयः शीलं मह ओजो बलं भगः।
गाम्भीर्यं स्थैर्यमास्तिक्यं कीर्तिर्मानोऽनहङ्कृतिः॥
इमे चान्ये च भगवन्नित्या मम महागुणाः।
प्रार्थ्या महत्त्वमिच्छद्भिर्न वियन्ति स्म कर्हिचित्॥

character and glory etc., are all divine. He, however, who appears in the world as an Avatāra and is open to the perception of all is God qualified by Māyā.* God who really transcends Māyā is not open to the perception of all; for everybody is not qualified to perceive Him. Hence the Lord ever remains veiled by His Māyā. The Lord Himself says in *Gītā:*—

नाहं प्रकाशः सर्वस्य योगमायासमावृतः ।
मूढोऽयं नाभिजानाति लोको मामजमव्ययम् ॥

(VII. 25)

"Veiled by My Yogamāyā (divine potency) I am not open to the perception of all. Hence these ignorant folk fail to recognize Me, the unborn and imperishable supreme Deity (i.e., consider Me as subject to birth and death)."

He, however, unveils Himself and reveals His real form transcending Māyā before the devotee who knows the truth and mysteries of God, beholding which man realizes the end of his existence.

Really speaking, God is the suzerain Lord of all lords, unborn and imperishable. He is free from birth and death; He simply appears and disappears for the good of the world, or in other words He reveals and hides Himself. The man who comes to know the divine and transcendent character of His birth as above attains God-Realization (*Gītā* IV. 9).

The Lord's glory too is most inscrutable and transcendent. He is possessed of the entire strength, power, splendour, energy, valour, glory, capability, affluence, greatness, brilliance omniscience, universal causativity, the power of sustaining and controlling all, universal lordship, all-witnessing capacity and

---

* The Lord says in the *Gītā:*—

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय संभवाम्यात्ममायया ॥

(IV. 6)

"Though birthless and deathless, and the Lord of all beings, I manifest Myself through My own Yogamāyā, keeping My Nature under control."

other infinite, boundless and unique powers. Just as with the rising of the sun all darkness entirely vanishes, even so the thought of and meditation upon the divine reality eradicates all one's vices, immoral practices, weaknesses, sorrows and faults and a man is not only adorned with virtues and good conduct, but is able to cross the ocean of mundane existence characterized by birth and death and easily attains God. God being infinite, inscrutable and spiritual, His glory too is infinite, inscrutable and divine. It is impossible to describe in full the unthinkable and infinite glory of God, Whose mere thought automatically brings forth, sustains and destroys countless universes, whose gracious look alone can redeem millions and millions of living beings in an instant, Who can bring that which is impossible into the region of possibility and vice versa, Who can turn a living being into a lifeless object and infuse life into a lifeless object, and Who can elevate a mosquito to the position of Brahmā (the Creator) and reduce Brahmā to the state of a mosquito. The aggregate of all that is glorious and endowed with splendour, might, affluence and other remarkable qualities is a mere shadow of an iota of the Lord's glory; for all the numberless universes exist in a fraction of the Lord's idea*. The man who comes to know the truth and mysteries of such a God immediately realizes Him.

Hence in order to know the divine truth and mysteries one should ever and unceasingly meditate with reverence and love and in a disinterested spirit on the reality of God alongwith His excellences and glory.

* The Lord Himself says in the *Gītā*:—

यद्यद् विभूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमदूर्जितमेव वा।
तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोंऽशसम्भवम्॥

(X.41)

The Three Stages of Karma

Every Karma or voluntary act, which is either noble or ignoble or of a mixed type, has three stages. It is called 'Kriyamāṇa' when it is being actually performed with some interested motive as well as with attachment and sense of doership. Every action thus performed stays in the form of a potentiality (Adṛṣṭa), which results in a pleasurable or painful experience to the doer in a subsequent birth or even in the present birth under exceptional circumstances, according as the action is good or evil. The totality of such potentialities accumulated in numberless previous births as well as in the present birth and which are not yet ripe for fruition but lie stored up in what is known as the Karmāśaya (the seat of such potentialities) has been termed as 'Sañcita'. Such of these potentialities as are ripe for fruition and determine the nature of birth and the span of life in a particular birth and bring enjoyment or punishment as an occasion for pleasure and pain * go by the name of Prārabdha or destiny. A 'Kriyamāṇa' is also known by the name of 'Puruṣārtha' or personal effort; but an action which is free from attachment to the fruit and is not accompanied with a sense of doership is, really speaking, no 'action' at all (*Gītā* IV.20; XVIII.17).

Of the aforesaid three stages of action, it is the 'Sañcita' (or the accumulated potentialities of our actions) which is responsible for

---

* As a matter of fact, the individual soul experiences such pleasure or pain only in its state of ignorance. Pleasure or pain does not inhere in a particular event, object or circumstance; it depends on our notion of agreeability or otherwise of a thing and this notion has its root in ignorance. Hence birth in a particular womb, the length of one's existence in a particular body and the experiences undergone in that existence bring pleasure or pain only to the ignorant. In the eyes of the wise there exists nothing but Brahma, Who is Consciousness and Bliss solidified and Who is their own self. Similarly in the eye of a devotee all that exists is God and His sport. The Divine Player and His Play are identical. Therefore he too, instead of perceiving agreeability or disagreeability sees God everywhere; that is why he too does not experience any pleasure or pain. He feels enraptured every moment at the sight of the varied sports of the Lord, which are identical with the Lord Himself.

the good and evil promptings or impulses of our mind; but it lies within our power to translate these impulses into action or to control them. Even a noble impulse proves abortive when it is not acted upon for want of adequate effort on our part. Prārabdha or destiny too is responsible for our impulses and our actions follow these impulses. But here a man is not bound to act upon these impulses. Of course, he must reap the fruit of his Prārabdha. If a propitious fate awaits him, he will get good results even without any effort on his part either without anybody's will or through another's will. He will get unhappy results too in a similar way. As for a fresh voluntary act (Kriyamāṇa), it invariably yields fresh results. Certainly an act of this kind will not as a rule yield its fruit immediately. If our effort is powerful enough, it is readily converted into a fresh Prārabdha and supersedes an older Prārabdha which was ripe for fruition. Suppose a man's Prārabdha does not preordain the birth of a son to him; but if he performs a Putreṣṭi sacrifice with due ceremony, this act of his is converted into a fresh Prārabdha and causes the birth of a son. For example, Sāvitrī was able to secure a boon of long life for her husband, Satyavān, from Yama (the god of death) by propitiating the latter through her devotion to her lord. This too was a case of fresh Prārabdha, generated by a powerful effort (Kriyamāṇa). In the case of temporal results, however, it is the Prārabdha generated by our former actions which is mainly responsible. As has been shown above, our impulses proceed from the Sañcita (the stock of accumulated potentialities of previous actions that have not yet borne fruit); the nature of our birth, the duration of life in a particular body and our welcome or unwelcome experiences in that life, all of which are attended with pleasure and pain, are determined by Prārabdha; while our fresh activities are attributable to our personal effort. The following parable is intended to show how Sañcita, Prārabdha and Kriyamāṇa operate when they preponderate one over the other.

There were three friends sitting together at one place. Somebody came and told them that a very great Mahātmā had turned up and was available at a particular place. One of the friends thereupon suggested that they too should go and have his blessed sight.

Another expressed his unwillingness to go but did not object to the other two friends going there. The third one agreed to the proposal and the two friends repaired to the place where the Mahātmā was staying. When, however, they reached the place they came to know that the Mahātmā had gone to the city not long before and that he was expected back after some time. Thereupon the third friend, who had accompanied the first, stayed there with a firm resolve to see the Mahātmā, however late he might be in returning from the city. The first one, however, was impatient to go away as he could not afford to wait for such a long time. In this way the third one waited there, while the first one left the place. The Mahātmā, for his part, in course of his perambulations in the city happened to visit the very place where the second friend was, the one who had declined to move from his place in order to have a Darśana of the Mahātmā and had remained where he was. This man was thus blessed with the sight of the Mahātmā at his own place and was saved the trouble of going anywhere else. The Mahātmā then returned to his lodging and there the third friend too, who had been waiting for him all alongwith a firm resolve to see him, was also blessed with his sight. The second man, who had returned from the Mahātmā's lodging and had not the patience to wait, took a different route while returning, and was thus deprived of the Mahātmā's sight. In the case of the first of these three men his accumulated potentialities of noble acts done in a previous life were predominant; it was these potentialities which accounted for his impulse to visit the Mahātmā; but due to slackness of effort he declined to wait for the Mahātmā even after reaching his place and returned without seeing him. In the case of the second man his propitious Prārabdha or good destiny preponderated and it was this Prārabdha which brought about his meeting with the Mahātmā at his own place. In the case of the third man, however, his noble effort was the uppermost; this made him wait for the Mahātmā with a firm resolve to see him, and he returned only after obtaining his sight. The above parable too establishes the supremacy of human effort.

There are four objects of human endeavour, viz., religious merit, worldly possession, sensuous enjoyment and final beatitude. For

the attainment of religious merit and final beatitude human effort is the principal factor; while for securing worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment Prārabdha or destiny is the primary requisite. Ignorant folk conveniently leave Dharma (religious merit) and Mokṣa (final beatitude) to their Prārabdha and thus remain deprived of the same; for devotion to one's sacred duties and the endeavour to attain Mokṣa are fresh acts and not the fruit of deeds committed in some previous existence. A man's good disposition and accumulated potentialities of noble deeds committed in previous lives are helpful inasmuch as they inspire such devotion and endeavour. As for Prārabdha it interferes with the pursuit of Dharma and Mokṣa in the case of a man of feeble will by inducing unwelcome circumstances like illness and the loss of welcome objects; while in some cases it proves helpful by procuring the fellowship of saints etc. But the principal factor in the pursuit of Dharma and Mokṣa is self-effort; for Dharma and Mokṣa cannot be pursued as a matter of course. Therefore, for the pursuit of Dharma and Mokṣa a man should fall back upon the good-will of exalted souls and strive with resolution and assiduity.

PRĀRABDHA

For securing worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment ignorant folk commit various sins like lying, deceit, thieving, adultery and so on; but they gain nothing thereby. They get only as much as was pre-assigned to them by fate, which they would surely get even if they did not commit any sin. A man deliberately perpetrates sinful acts, but is loth to reap their fruit in the shape of suffering. But despite all his efforts to escape it, he must reap their consequences in the shape of misery. Just as the fruit of sin, viz., suffering cannot be averted by our best efforts to counteract it, even so the fruit of our meritorious acts, viz., pleasure in the shape of worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment must be had without any effort on our part. Our attempt to secure these is only a pretext; for the principal factor in attaining them is Prārabdha or destiny. More than what has been alotted to us as our share cannot be had and what has been preordained for us cannot be averted despite our efforts to counteract it; hence it is sheer folly to commit sin for securing worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment.

People ignorantly regard worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment as dependent on their personal effort and spend their life in their pursuit; nay, by committing sins of various kinds they are condemned to demoniac wombs and to the infernal regions ! But if worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment could be had through personal effort, everybody would grow rich and everybody would have his or her desire fulfilled; for everyone seeks to grow rich as well as to have one's desire fulfilled. But we do not find such a thing happening. In certain cases where worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment are attained as a result of powerful Prārabdha earned in a previous life, ignorant folk attribute this success to their own effort; but they are mistaken. Hence it does not behove a man to waste his life in the pursuit of worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment.

The fruit of one's Prārabdha is reaped in three ways—without anybody's will, through another's will and through one's own volition.

Man courts neither death nor suffering. But as a result of sins committed in previous lives he suffers from the painful effects of a stroke of lightning, pestilence, famine, fire and floods etc.; while some people even die of the same. Similarly, as a result of meritorious deeds done in a former existence, one stumbles on a treasure trove all of a sudden or the value of one's ancestral property is enhanced, which is a source of pleasure to him. In all these cases one reaps the fruit of one's Prārabdha without anybody's will.

Again, as a result of sins committed in a previous life, damage is caused to one's person or property or to one's own men through a thief or robber, lion or tiger, which is a source of pain to him; and even so, as a result of meritorious deeds done in a former existence, one is adopted by some wealthy man or inherits a kingdom from some monarch, which is a source of pleasure to him. In all these cases one reaps the fruit of one's Prārabdha through another's will.

Man is altogether helpless in the matter of reaping the fruit of his Prārabdha in the form of pleasure or pain without anybody's will or through the will of another as shown above. As a result of sins committed in a previous life one sustains a loss in agriculture and business etc., and the remedial measures adopted by him to counteract his own disease or that of his people yield contrary results, which causes pain to him. Even so, as a result of meritorious

deeds done in a former existence, one succeeds in one's voluntary efforts to secure a wife, progeny, wealth, house etc., which are a source of gratification to him. In all these cases one reaps the fruit of one's Prārabdha through one's own will.

In this way the pleasure and pain we experience in our present life is mostly the result of deeds done in a previous existence. But in some cases a powerful act done even in the present life is immediately converted into a Prārabdha and thus gets ripe for fruition in this very life. For example, a man commits sins like adultery etc., and contracts venereal diseases like syphilis, gonorrhoea, spermatorrhoea etc.; and even so another man undertakes with due ceremony and reverence the performance of a sacrifice, austere penance, charity and other meritorious acts with the object of securing a wife, progeny and wealth or curing a disease, and in consequence attains his desired object. To him, however, who assiduously pursues disciplines like Devotion, spiritual knowledge, dispassion and disinterested action etc., Liberation (God-Realization) speedily comes to view in this very life as a result of these practices.

SAÑCITA

Of the fresh actions (Kriyamāṇa) that a man performs in his present life, the portion which is immediately converted into Prārabdha and becomes ripe for fruition is exhausted after yielding its fruit; while the rest are included in the accumulated potentialities (Sañcita Karma) of his previous lives. The stock of these potentialities can be attenuated and exhausted through spiritual disciplines like Devotion, Jñāna and disinterested action. Until this stock of our accumulated potentialities is exhausted our round of births does not cease. Whatever actions a man performs— no matter whether they are meritorious, sinful or of a mixed type—abide in his heart in the form of (i) the seeds of pleasure and pain, which determine his future birth, length of life and the nature of pleasurable and painful experience to be undergone in that life; and (ii) Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika proclivities, which go to make up his disposition. Of these twofold potentialities the former disappear after yielding their fruit; while his Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika tendencies persist in the form of his disposition and they

incite him to virtuous or sinful acts in future. Therefore, a man should curb his Rājasika and Tāmasika proclivities by pursuing Devotion, spiritual knowledge and disinterested action with discernment and dispassion, and release a stream of purely Sāttvika thoughts with a view to reforming his nature. By striving in this way a man's accumulated potentialities of past Karma as well as his Rājasika and Tāmasika proclivities get obliterated and he becomes qualified for God-Realization.

KRIYAMĀṆA

The actions of a virtuous, sinful or mixed type that one performs with one's mind, speech or body and which are prompted by likes and dislikes, desire, attachment and egotism are termed as 'Kriyamāṇa'; and even those actions that one does in order to reap the fruit of one's Prārabdha through one's own will are comprised in 'Kriyamāṇa'; for apart from what is done as a matter of duty, anything which is done in accordance with or against the Śāstras is either meritorious or sinful and is therefore included in what is known as the 'Kriyamāṇa'.

The ignorant folk who have no faith in God or destiny seek to attain worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment through their personal effort rather than through their destiny—by means of lying, deceit, thieving, adultery and so on; but thereby they cannot achieve any success over and above that which is ensured by their Prārabdha. Whatever they get, they get according to their Prārabdha; but, fools as they are, they uselessly incur sin by acting contrary to the Śāstras. They, however, who have faith in God and destiny seek to attain worldly possessions and sensuous enjoyment by truthful and fair means through acts which are consistent with the Śāstras rather than through any sinful act. They never deviate from truth, equity and virtue even in the clutches of great adversity. Therefore, apart from achieving their object according to their Prārabdha they also earn religious merit thereby.

Actions which are free from partiality and prejudice, desire, attachment and egotism or are performed for the sake of God or in a spirit of dedication to God are no actions at all; hence they are not comprised in what is known as 'Kriyamāṇa'. Even so acts which are mentally performed in a dream are not included in 'Kriyamāṇa'. For they are not conscious acts; being under the spell of sleep, the doer is

helpless during such acts. Hence they fall under the category of actions revealing the fruit of one's Prārabdha without the will of another or through one's own will.

One must reap the fruit of one's Prārabdha; hence the latter is exhausted after yielding its fruit; and if a part of it stands over, it does not interfere with God-Realization. Even after a man has realized God occasions for joy and sorrow will continue to appear in his body as a result of Prārabdha; hence the persistence of Prārabdha causes no harm to him. All one's liabilities in the shape of Prārabdha, Sañcita and Kriyamāṇa can be liquidated and God can be realized through spiritual disciplines like Devotion, spiritual knowledge and disinterested action if practised with discernment and dispassion. A God-realized man has no liabilities in the form of Sañcita; while his fresh actions or Kriyamāṇa as they are called no longer react on him. For actions which are ascribed to him are absolutely free from partiality and prejudice, desire, attachment, egotism and other morbid feelings; hence they are no actions at all. Besides that, since he feels no attachment or aversion with regard to the occurrences that take place through him as a result of his Prārabdha, there is no experiencer of pleasure or pain. Hence even though his Prārabdha stands, it is as good as non-existent; we simply ascribe to him occurrences that serve as an occasion for joy and sorrow. But a man who is altogether free from morbid feelings like pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, has no connection whatsoever, as a matter of fact, with occurrences serving as an occasion for joy and sorrow and attributable to his Prārabdha. Hence his Prārabdha too stands virtually exhausted.

The Śruti says:—

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।
क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥

(Muṇḍ. Up. II.ii.8)

"When a man realizes the all-embracing Divinity, the knot of ignorance subsisting in his heart is broken, all his doubts get resolved and his liabilities in the form of Prārabdha, Sañcita and Kriyamāṇa are liquidated."

Duties of Married Women

There is nothing so sacred for a married woman as a vow of unflinching devotion to her lord. Therefore, she should devote herself to his service in thought, word and deed. Loyalty to her husband is the paramount religious duty of a woman. All other duties are of secondary importance to her. The great law-giver Manu has clearly laid down that a woman should not undertake any sacrifice, vow or fast without her husband's consent. By doing service to her lord and administering to his comfort alone a woman reaches the highest goal and even the Gods sing her praises in heaven. The woman who undertakes a sacred vow or observes a fast without her husband's consent shortens his life and herself goes to hell.

Therefore, a woman should not even perform sacrifices or charitable acts, nor should she undertake pilgrimages, sacred vows etc., much less pursue any worldly activities without her husband's permission. The husband alone is a woman's sacred resort, her sacred vow, her deity and her most adorable preceptor. Contrary to this, the woman who makes another her Guru (spiritual guide) without her husband's leave goes to the most fearful hell. These days many impostors in the garb of hermits, heads of monasteries and devotees give currency to the false notion that there is no redemption without a Guru and robbing innocent women of their wealth and honour by tempting them with hollow hopes of salvation, attain an abode in the most dreadful hell. Our mothers and sisters should beware of such impostors and swindlers. It is sacrilegious even to look at the face

of such men. Manu and other Law-givers have declared that women attain salvation only through a vow of devotion to their husband. Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa also says:—

एकइ धर्म एक व्रत नेमा। कायँ बचन मन पति पद प्रेमा॥
बिनु श्रम नारि परम गति लहई। पतिव्रत धर्म छाड़ि छल गहई॥

"Devotion of body, speech and mind to her lord's feet is the only act of piety, the only sacred vow and the only austere penance for a woman. The woman who sincerely takes a vow of fidelity to her husband easily attains the highest state."

That woman alone is devoted to her husband, who thinks well of her lord, speaks truthful, agreeable and salutary words to him and employs her person in his service and in carrying out his behest. A devoted wife does nothing against the wishes of her husband. She attains the highest destiny alongwith her husband and is acclaimed as a virtuous lady. The husband alone is the constant delight of a woman both here and hereafter.

Therefore, a woman should never go against the wishes of her husband in the slightest measure. The woman who does so, that is, who acts contrary to her husband's will incurs obloquy in this world and descends into the lowest depths of degradation after death. Says Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa:—

पति प्रतिकूल जनम जहँ जाई। बिधवा होइ पाइ तरुनाई॥

"She who is disloyal to her lord is widowed as soon as she attains her youth wherever she may be born."

Such is declared to be the fate of the woman who goes against the wishes of her lord. It goes without saying, then, what dreadful fate awaits the woman who takes to adultery.

पति बंचक परपति रति करई। रौरव नरक कल्प सत परई॥

"The woman who deceives her husband and loves a paramour is cast for a hundred cycles into the worst form of hell known by the name of Raurava."

Therefore, a woman should not think of other men even in a dream, much less in the waking state. The most virtuous of wives is she whose attitude of mind has been depicted as below:—

उत्तम के अस बस मन माहीं। सपनेहुँ आन पुरुष जग नाहीं॥

"A woman of the best type is convinced in her heart of hearts that she cannot even dream in this world of a man other than her lord."

Even if the husband is a rake and lacking in amiability and other excellences, a devoted wife should always serve and wait upon him as if he were God Himself:—

विशीलः कामवृत्तो वा गुणैर्वा परिवर्जितः।
उपचर्यः स्त्रिया साध्व्या सततं देववत् पतिः॥

(Manu. V. 154)

In no case should a husband be insulted. A woman who slights her husband undergoes terrible sufferings in the other world. Says Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa:—

बृद्ध रोगबस जड़ धनहीना। अंध बधिर क्रोधी अति दीना॥
ऐसेहु पति कर किएँ अपमाना। नारि पाव जमपुर दुख नाना॥

"A woman who treats her husband with disrespect—even though he is old, sick, dull-headed, indigent, blind, deaf, wrathful or most wretched—shall suffer various torments in hell (the abode of Yama)."

A virtuous woman should observe the general rules of conduct prescribed for men and women. A woman who knows the true meaning of devotion to her husband should serve and adore with great reverence and carry out the behests of her husband's elders such as her father-in-law, mother-in-law and others; for they command the respect even of her husband. Sītā, Sāvitrī and others who are paragons of wifely devotion have acted in the above manner. When Sāvitrī accompanied her husband to the forest, she did so only after taking leave from his parents although she had already obtained the permission of her husband. Sītā too followed Śrī Rāma after She had received the permission, exhortation and blessings from Kausalyā (Śrī Rāma's mother).

Virtuous women should impart valuable lessons to their boys and girls both by their precept and example. The conduct of parents makes an extraordinary impression upon their children. Therefore, entirely giving up immoral practices like lying, hypocrisy etc., and evil propensities like lust, anger etc., women should conduct themselves in an ideal manner. Many women are in the habit of abusing and cursing their children and beguiling them with false assurances and also frightening them with the false presence of a bugbear and so on. All these practices are very harmful and women should take care to eschew them. Such things easily take root in the impressionable mind of a child who learns lying, deception etc., and grows very timorous and craven. Children should be instructed in such a forceful and dignified language as would instil in their heart bravery, resolution and sobriety. For developing their understanding and knowledge, children should be taught sacred books. Children should not be abused; for to call them names is to inculcate the same habit in them. One should not use obscene, indecent, and pungent words either. Company makes a great impression on our mind. Even birds and beasts cultivate good or bad habits due to the effect of good or evil company. We are told that even the birds that had been caged at Maṇḍana Miśra's door uttered sentences from the scriptures. It is seen even now that birds living with persons in the habit of using abusive language cultivate the habit of calling the visitors names. Therefore, one should always speak only truthful, agreeable, gentle, sweet and wholesome words in loving and soft accents and in a calm and collected manner. Women should never indulge in sporting or cutting jokes with their husband nor should they sit or lie down with him on the same bed in the presence of children. Women who do so teach their children immoral habits.

The sight and touch, private interviews and the thought of even a picture of another man should be avoided. Women should always keep aloof from greed, infatuation, grief, violence, hypocrisy and false show of piety etc., and with a view to developing good qualities and an exemplary conduct they should cultivate the habit of reading the *Gītā* and *Rāmāyaṇa, Śrīmad*

Bhāgavata and *Mahābhārata,* as well as the biographies of pious and virtuous ladies and the children too should be taught good lessons from these books.

Good lessons should be imparted to children while feeding and nourishing them. We read in the Purāṇas how Queen Madālasā raised her children to a high spiritual level by instructing them spiritual wisdom and dispassion even in their very cradle. Parents should take particular care to see that their children do not learn evil ways by resorting to the company of bad boys or undesirable men and women. They should use hand-woven indigenous textile products for themselves as well as for their children. Children should be so educated that they develop a love not for decoration, toilet, luxury etc., but for good conduct, noble virtues, simplicity, service, God, religion and so on.

Children should not be adorned with jewels. Such a practice is prejudicial to their health and sometimes involves a risk to their life as well. They should be encouraged to take physical exercise for making them stronger of body and should be imparted knowledge and good education for the growth of their intellect. Parents should also be careful to see that their children do not cultivate the evil habit of going to theatres and picture-houses, get addicted to smoking and drinking and taking intoxicant drugs. No discrimination should be made between boys and girls while feeding and nourishing them, bestowing love and affection on them or even in general treatment. Generally in India women do not accord the same treatment to girls as they do to boys in feeding and nourishing them, in bestowing love and affection on them and in attending to their joys and sorrows, nor do they entertain the same feeling towards their death etc. Nay, they treat their girls lightly. How can those women who accord differential treatment even to their own children be expected to develop the attitude of even-mindedness ? Such discrimination brings infamy in this world and entails misery in the next. Therefore, children should be treated equally.

Many women stand in awe of certain persons taking them to be possessed by some spirit or ghost, demigod or saint and so on.

Generally there is no truth in such possession. No misdirected reverence or faith should be entertained in regard to such matters. Mostly such phenomena are traceable to hysteria and other nervous disorders. At many places dissimulation is deliberately practised, while in certain cases the mind is possessed only by some mental illusion or terror. These are all useless and harmful things. Therefore, women should neither seek the help of magic or sorcery, palmistry, exorcism etc., either for themselves or for their people, nor keep the company of women who seek the help of such practices.

The company of harlots and immoral women as well as of quarrelsome, shameless and wicked women should never be resorted to. But no hatred or ill-will should be borne even towards them. Their vices only should be hated. Special attention should be paid to the service of the elders, the afflicted, the guests of the house and the forlorn. Sacrificial performances, austere penance, service, pilgrimages, sacred vows and worship of gods should be undertaken and charity etc., practised alongwith the husband, with his permission, for his satisfaction and in obedience to him, not independently.

The chosen deity of the husband is the chosen deity of the wife as well. Therefore, the name of the chosen Deity of the husband should be repeated and His form meditated upon. For a woman the husband alone is the preceptor. If devotion to God is not liked by the husband, a woman should abstain from such devotion, formal adoration, fellowship with saints and loud chanting of the Divine Name even if she has been habituated to these according to the training received at her father's house. She should practise remembrance of God, Japa (repetition of the Divine Name) and meditation secretly with the mind. Devotion being essentially an attitude of the mind, it should be kept secret as far as possible, because devotion practised secretly is more valuable.

Each and every order of the husband should be literally obeyed, excepting, of course, any order which, if carried out, would lead him to hell. For example, if under an impulse of lust, anger, greed or infatuation the husband urges her to perpetrate

grave sins like theft or adultery, to take meat or wine, to poison or murder anyone, to extinguish the flame of life in an embryo or to slaughter a cow and so on, such orders should not be obeyed. Even if non-compliance with such orders be regarded a sin, they should be flouted just in order to save the husband from the tortures of hell. An endeavour should always be made in a selfless manner to do that which is calculated to serve the best interests of the husband. A husband too should never even unconsciously enjoin his pious and chaste wife to do an immoral act.

Special attention should be paid to the service of the widows, because a widow who is steadfast to her vow of piety is like unto a goddess. By serving and administering to her comfort and loving her a woman enjoys happiness in this world and attains an exalted state in the next. The woman who maltreats a widow becomes miserable in this world on account of the latter's sighs of grief and goes to hell after death.

The pious woman who selflessly discharges the above-mentioned duties of a devoted wife enjoys supreme peace and bliss in this world and attains the highest state after death.

Indian Culture and the Duties of a Woman

Indian culture possesses a unique character of its own. It has been built on very solid foundations of spirituality by those ancient seers who had knowledge alike of the past, present and future, nay, who were gifted with the divine vision, were free from likes and dislikes and looked upon all with an equal eye. The range of their vision extended beyond the mortal plane. The conclusions arrived at by them with their intellect purified by austere penance and in the light of divine wisdom acquired during Samādhi (abstract meditation) are absolutely faultless, free from error, true for all times and beyond the grasp of human reason. If we proceed to test them on the touch-stone of our impure, deluded, narrow and indeterminate reason, we shall only be put off the scent rather than gain anything thereby. Ever since we Indians gave up our allegiance to the Śāstras and took to arbitrary ways, we have fallen on evil times. And if, God forbid, we do not change our ways, one does not know to what abysmal depths of degradation we shall be hurling ourselves.

The present is an age of free-thinking. The man of today accepts no constraint or restraint on his reason. Today we hear deluded persons crying on all sides: "Away with the Śāstras ! Allegiance to dogma is a form of slavery !! Faith in God is a sign of slave mentality !!!" In India too we are feeling the impact of a thought-wave from the West, which has unsettled our mind, has shaken our faith. We too have started raving like madmen: "Destroy the scriptures ! Burn the Code of Manu !! Religion is the root of discord !!!" and so on. The present-day woman of India too, who was till now an embodiment of good disposition, modesty, bashfulness and virtue, has foolishly begun to echo her Western sisters and exclaim: "We would no longer be slaves of men ! We have no desire to follow in the footsteps of Sītā or

Sāvitrī !! Conjugal fidelity is a superstition !!! The Indian seers have done grave injustice to us by making us dependent on men !!!" and so on. In such adverse times, when people have begun to look upon religion as a mere empty show, an attempt to write something on religion—particularly on the sacred duties of a woman—would be considered an act of sheer presumption on my part. Armed, however, with the belief that truth does not lose by criticism, that truth is truth—no matter whether anyone recognizes it or not—and actuated by a sense of duty, we undertake to write a few lines about the duties of a woman according to our own poor lights on the basis of the scriptures.

The word 'Dharma' is derived from the root 'धृ धारणपोषणयोः'; hence it means that which holds or sustains everything. Everyone will have to admit that this cosmos is governed by some law. The earth and the heavens, the sun and the moon, the stars and the lunar mansions, water and air, the animate and inanimate beings, life and death, creation and dissolution, growth and decay, progress and retrogression, ascent and descent— everything is subject to a definite law. No activity of the world goes against this law. It is this divine law which goes by the name of Dharma. The conscious energy which intelligently and systematically operates this law is known by the name of God; those trustworthy persons, gifted with extraordinary insight and powers and enjoying the Lord's special grace, who actually 'see' this law operating, are called 'Ṛṣis' (seers); the sacred books recording the mystic experiences and revelations of these seers as well as the immutable laws framed on the basis of these revelations and according to divine inspiration for the all-round welfare of the human society here as well as hereafter enjoy the appellation of 'Śāstra'. These are the four main pillars of Sanātana Dharma or the Eternal Religion. The edifice of Indian (Hindu) culture is supported on these and this constitutes its distinctive character. This makes it clear that Dharma or Śāstra is neither a bugbear nor something to be ignored or neglected. According to the above interpretation of Dharma—and that which has been given above is the most simple, orthodox and universally acknowledged interpretation—Dharma

is the sole means to the material advancement of the world as well as to final beatitude; it is Dharma alone that contributes to the true and lasting good of mankind; it is through Dharma that peace and prosperity can reign supreme in the world*; it is on the basis of Dharma that the human race can be truly united and consolidated and it is Dharma again that can protect and safeguard the rights and interests of all. They who allege that Dharma makes for disunion, that Dharma alone has brought about the downfall of the Hindu race or India, that it is Dharma that is responsible for mutual dissensions and quarrels, and so on and so forth have understood Dharma in a sense altogether different from what it really bears.

Similarly it is through the Śāstras (scriptures) that one can know what Dharma is. The correct and authoritative knowledge of any subject whatsoever can be acquired only through men who have thoroughly mastered that subject and through their works. Granted that modern science has succeeded partially in discovering a few truths of the physical world; but their knowledge of those truths is yet most imperfect and limited. That it is still open to correction and revision is admitted by the scientists themselves. Then the physical world alone is not everything. Beyond this world, and much more extensive, finer and purer and more beautiful than this, and of which the physical world is a mere shadow or replica, is an unseen world, of which there are many strata and which is inhabited by living beings more developed, more powerful and more long-lived than we of this mortal plane. Our sages and seers have discovered this unseen world too and they have not only thoroughly understood but actually seen what relation there exists between this world and that unseen world, how the inhabitants of this world are influenced by the denizens of that world and how the unseen

---

* श्रुतिस्मृत्युदितं धर्ममनुतिष्ठन् हि मानवः।
इह कीर्तिमवाप्नोति प्रेत्य चानुत्तमं सुखम्॥

(*Manusmrti* II.9)

forces of that world control the tide of events of this world. They have also seen the unseen regions that are visited by the soul after its departure from this world and what it does in those regions, the line of conduct through which one can enjoy happiness even after death and attain immortality and the type of actions which, on the other hand, degrade us in the scale of spiritual evolution and make us miserable. They have further realized that the joys and sorrows, high and low position, noble and vile brith—in fact, all that falls to our lot in this world is an outcome of our virtuous and sinful deeds committed in previous lives and that without the help and co-operation of the forces of the unseen world there can be no hope of peace and prosperity in this world. And our diverse scriptures— our Vedas and Purāṇas and our Smṛti-texts are nothing but authentic records of all that our Ṛṣis have seen and actualized as well as of the line of conduct which they have ascertained and realized as conducive to our good in the light of those revelations and experiences. Therefore, all that is written in our Śāstras is absolutely and unquestionably true, unbiassed and free from partiality or prejudice and has no trace of selfishness. The great sages who have seen the truth in its true perspective can never tell lies. To smell untruth, error, partiality or prejudice and selfishness in their writings is to harm oneself and to shut out the truth.

Whatever we propose to write on the subject of duties of women in the following paragraphs will be based on the works actually written or compiled by these omniscient seers. If the conclusions arrived at by them fail to appeal to the modern man with a mind tainted by partiality and prejudice, perverted and impure, or if the conclusions strike them as biassed or mistaken, we are not to blame for it. It is a settled fact that these conclusions are absolutely true and based on true data and can do good to all who accept and follow them; for the conclusions of the Śāstras are equally conducive to the welfare of all. It is culpable to imagine that the Ṛṣis have shown partiality to one class and wronged or marred the interests of another. How can partiality be attributed

to the sages who saw one life pulsating in all or one God indwelling all creatures. Certainly they knew— or rather know (for the Ṛṣis have not quitted their body; they still exist in the celestial plane in ethereal bodies and, ever casting on us their gracious look, continue like a loving mother to contemplate and do good to us. Of course, if we repeatedly court misery and wilfully persist in doing harm to ourselves by ignorantly flouting their injunctions and straying from the noble path chalked out by them for us, they cannot help it!)—that though we are all one as a spiritual entity, our actions and bodies, mind and intellect, temperament and predispositions vary; hence our conduct cannot be uniform nor can our capacities be similar. It is therefore that they have prescribed diverse duties for diverse individuals according to their past actions and capacities and alongwith their duties they have also allotted different privileges to all. They have at the same time ensured that while remaining within one's sphere everyone should achieve the supreme end of one's embodied existence, viz., God-Realization, as expeditiously as possible.

It is an admitted fact that the very idea of creation presupposes heterogeneity. When Prakṛti is in a state of equilibrium, the world does not exist at all. God alone is there; Prakṛti, which is the seed of creation, also lies dormant in Him. The process of creation starts only when the equilibrium of the three Guṇas—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas—is disturbed by the will of God. And until this creation merges into Prakṛti once more at the end of a complete cycle of evolution or Mahāsarga as it is called, the play of heterogeneity continues uninterrupted. And so long as there is heterogeneity, the diversity in our dealings with the world can never be eliminated, however much we may try to do away with it. Wherever there is heterogeneity, diversity of functions and diversity of rights and privileges are sure to follow. It is this diversity which has led our Ṛṣis to divide society into so many Varṇas or grades and Āśramas or stages of life. It is this diversity which has led them to allot diverse duties to men and women and assign diverse spheres of activity to them. It is this diversity again which has prompted them to declare certain sections and

sub-sections as untouchables and others as touchables. And it is this diversity which has been responsible for the creation of a number of divisions or classes such as the Ruler and the ruled, master and servant, the teacher and the taught, the Brāhmaṇa and the Śūdra, intellectuals and labourers, the householder and the recluse, husband and wife and so on—which are essential for the proper functioning of the world order. The moment we refuse to recognize this natural divison or distinction and indulge in the vain attempt to jumble all into one homogeneous whole, confusion and an overlapping of functions set in, class-warfare begins, a quarrel over rights and privileges ensues and the question of superiority and inferiority comes to the forefront. The more we try to root out disparity the chasm grows wider and wider, with the consequence that the society gets disrupted and disintegrated. Disparity, nonetheless, persists in one form or other. It was in order to guard against this confusion and chaos and to escape its evil consequences that our foresighted seers, endowed as they were with the divine eye, split up the human society into so many natural divisions according to the Guṇas (distinctive traits) and Karma (the record of doings in previous births) of the individuals, and assigned diverse duties or sacred obligations to them.

Dharma or duty has been broadly divided under two heads: (1) Sāmānya (universal or general) and (2) Viśeṣa (special). The Sāmānya Dharma or Mānava Dharma is equally obligatory for all human beings. The ten characteristic features of Dharma taught by Manu*, viz., Dhṛti (fortitude), Kṣamā (forbearance), Dama (self-control or control of the mind), Asteya (non-thieving), Śauca (purity of body), Indriya-Nigraha (control of the senses), Dhī (a Sāttvika intellect), Vidyā (true wisdom or a correct sense of good and evil), Satya (truthfulness or veracity) and Akrodha (freedom from anger); the five forms of Yama (abstinence) taught

---

* धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥

(Manusmṛti VI.12)

by Patañjali *, viz., Ahiṁsā (harmlessness), Satya (truthfulness or veracity), Asteya (non-thieving), Brahmacarya (continence) and Aparigraha (non-accummulation of objects of enjoyment other than the bare necessaries of life), the five Niyamas or sacred vows taught by Patañjali †, viz., Śauca (purity of body), Santoṣa (contentment), Tapas (austere penance), Svādhyāya (study of scriptures or chanting the Divine Names and praises of the Lord) and Īśvara-Praṇidhāna (carrying out the behests of God while adoring Him every moment in a spirit of self-surrender); and the twenty-six attributes forming part of the divine legacy mentioned in *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* ‡, viz., fearlessness, purity of mind, meditation on any form of the Lord with a view to Self-Realization, charity, control of the senses, Yajña (worship of the Supreme Deity or other minor deities, pouring oblations into the sacred fire and so on), Svādhyāya (study of sacred books or chanting the Divine Names), austere penance, straightness of mind, speech and body, harmlessness, veracity, freedom from anger, absence of the sense of doership in respect of actions, composure of mind, abstaining from malicious gossip, compassion for all living beings, absence of attachment to the pleasures of sense, mildness, a sense of shame in violating the injunctions of the scriptures or established usage, abstaining from frivolous pursuits, sublimity, forbearance, fortitude, purity of body, freedom from malice and absence of self-esteem—all these are included in the Universal Dharma or the Mānava Dharma. The cultivation of these virtues is desirable for men and women

---

* अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः ।
(Yoga-Sūtras II. 30)

† शौचसंतोषतपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः ।
(Ibid. II.32)

‡ अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धिर्ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः ।
दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम् ॥
अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागः शान्तिरपैशुनम् ।
दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम् ॥
तेजः क्षमा धृतिः शौचमद्रोहो नातिमानिता ।

of all classes, no matter to what particular Varṇa, community, sect or nationality they belong. The aforementioned divine virtues and practices are equally acceptable to the followers of all faiths and denominations; hence they are model virtues for all.

Besides these universal Dharmas, our Śāstras have also recognized some special Dharmas for particular classes of men, which they are specially required to follow in addition to the universal Dharmas, inasmuch as they are natural for them that is to say, have been inherited by them from their very birth or in the form of tendencies acquired in previous births. Birth is not an accident or a freak of nature according to our Śāstras. Jāti (birth), Āyuṣ (span of life) and Bhoga (the experience of pleasure and pain) are predestined and hence unalterable. We read in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad:—*

तद् य इह रमणीयचरणा अभ्याशो ह यत् ते रमणीयां योनिमापद्येरन् ब्राह्मणयोनिं वा क्षत्रिययोनिं वा वैश्ययोनिं वाथ य इह कपूयचरणा अभ्याशो ह यत् ते कपूयां योनिमापद्येरञ्श्वयोनिं वा सूकरयोनिं वा चाण्डालयोनिं वा।

(V.x.7)

"Such of the Jīvas as have done good deeds speedily attain good birth, that is to say, are born as a Brāhmaṇa, a Kṣatriya or a Vaiśya; whereas those that have committed ignoble acts are forthwith cast into impure wombs such as the womb of a dog, a swine or a pariah."

This explains why one man is born as the son of a world-emperor or of a master of untold riches while another is born in the house of a beggar, why one enjoys the full span of a hundred years while another dies in the prime of youth, why one leads a life of ease and comfort while another lives from hand to mouth, why one enjoys a robust health till the end of his life while another is a victim of diseases from his very birth.

According to the above doctrine, birth as a woman too is the result of one's past actions. A number of children are born of the same parents; some of them are endowed with the male organ and others with the female organ. What can this disparity be due

to if not to one's past actions? At the time of birth there is no difference in the limbs or the features of a male and a female child except the marks of sex. As they advance in age their constitutional differences become gradually perceptible. By the time they attain puberty these differences become marked and in the exuberance of youth they become fully manifest and continue to the end of their life. Their temperament, bodily strength and intellectual calibre too differ to a large extent. Women are generally prone to the faults of timidity, impurity, fickleness and lack of understanding etc. The spirit of self-sacrifice and the power of endurance are found in a larger measure in women than in men. Their heart holds sway over the head. Taking all these facts into consideration, our Śāstras have accorded to women a position subordinate to men. Under no circumstance have they been allowed freedom. The very frame of their body, the constitution of their limbs and their organic functions are such as make it natural and beneficial for them to remain under the protection of men.

In conformity with their temperament, intellectual development, physical constitution and bodily strength and prowess they have been assigned a sphere of activity different from that of men. A Hindu wife is the monarch of her home. To control the household and look to the sanitation of her house, to manage the kitchen and cook for the family, to bring up the children, to look to their education and moral development, to maintain an adequate stock of provisions and clothing, to balance the income and expenditure, to look after the entire family, to minister to their comfort and attend to their needs and above all to wait upon her husband, to gratify him in everyway and to free him from all household worries, to share his religious responsibilities, to preserve and propagate the line by giving birth to good progeny, to redeem herself as well as her husband by discharging her own sacred duties, to look upon her husband as an image or representative of the Lord and to bestow on him her undivided love and devotion—these are some of the important duties allotted to the women by our Śāstras. Service, self-denial

and self-sacrifice are the outstanding virtues of a woman. Self-surrender to her husband and giving her very best, her very being to her progeny is the most sacred vow of her life. The ideal life of a loyal and devoted wife teaches us how to surrender ourselves to the Lord. For all these reasons the woman occupies a very high position in Indian society. Under such circumstances it is for the advocates of equal rights for men and women to judge how far they are advancing the interests of Indian women by dubbing them as slaves of men and thereby arousing their animosity against the opposite sex, by shaking her loyalty to her husband and thus misleading her, and by dragging her from the elevated rank of a queen of the house to the unenviable position of a street beggar knocking about from door to door in search of employment or power! The natural disparity between man and woman from the point of view of bodily development, intellectual calibre and temperament can never be eliminated, however much we may try to do so; and consistent with this disparity, diversity in the duties, rights and sphere of activity of the two sexes is essential. To bring the spheres of activity and rights of the two sexes on a par would be disintegrating society. This can never conduce to the welfare of humanity. How strange that even though hearing and seeing with our own eyes what havoc is being wrought in the West by an attempt in this direction, how the peace and happiness of the family is becoming a thing of the past, we are getting impatient to step blindly in the shoes of the Westerner.

The education of our girls should fall in a line with their future life and ideals and should be such as may prove helpful to them in discharging their wifely duties. To instruct our girls in the same subjects as are taught to our boys and to mould their life according to the ideals of the latter is to ruin their career—to make them a loser in both ways.

The avowed object of the system of education now prevailing in our country—according to those responsible for its introduction—is to turn the Indian youths into so many slaves or clerks, to undermine their faith in their own culture, history,

forefathers and religion, to turn out a class of people who should be Indian in name alone but westernized at heart; and by extending the same system of education to our girls too we have not only brought complete ruin to them but have also sown the seeds of disaster even for ourselves as well as for the generation to come. We should frame a curriculum for our girls that should make them ideal and devoted wives like Sītā, Sāvitrī, Anasūyā, Madālasā and Gāndhārī. In addition to a working knowledge of Saṁskṛta as well as of their own mother-tongue and literature they should be imparted instruction in tailoring, embroidery and needle-work, the culinary art, the art of nourishing and bringing up children, elementary hygiene and sanitation, the rudiments of the indigenous system of medicine and household medicines, first aid to the injured, domestic economy, agriculture, Arithmetic and Economics, painting, carpentry and other handicrafts, an elementary knowledge of History and Geography, and above all should receive a practical training in good morals, ideal virtues, politeness of manners, simple living, steadfastness to duty, devotion to God and practical religion. Such instruction too should be given to them only at home as far as possible. Due to a deplorable lack of women teachers of an ideal character in our girls' schools, they do not generally exert a healthy moral influence on the girls and the latter often turn out luxurious and extravagant. Besides, according to the Indian ideal it is not good for grown-up girls to remain out of their houses. As for the co-education of boys and girls it is altogether repugnant to the Indian system of education, and therefore worth eschewing. It is calculated to do more harm than good to them. Hence it should be totally discarded. In our society a great restriction has been imposed on the mixing of men and women and in order to preserve the chastity and purity of women such restriction is most essential. Conjugal fidelity is regarded as the supreme embellishment of a woman and it is this virtue that has protected the Hindu race and Hindu religion. Purity of the soil and the seed— of the sperm and the ovum—alone contribute to the purity of a race and it is with this end in view that so much stress has

been laid in our scriptures on the chastity and fidelity of women. In that world-renowned drama, the "Abhijñāna-Śākuntala" of Kālidāsa, the great sage Kaṇva tenders an excellent piece of advice to his foster-daughter, Śakuntalā, while sending her away to her husband's home. The sage says:—

शुश्रूषस्व गुरून् कुरु प्रियसखीवृत्तिं सपत्नीजने
भर्तुर्विप्रकृतापि रोषणतया मा स्म प्रतीपं गमः।
भूयिष्ठं भव दक्षिणा परिजने भोगेष्वनुत्सेकिनी
यान्त्येवं गृहिणीपदं युवतयो वामाः कुलस्याधयः॥

"Serve your elders (your father-in-law, mother-in-law and so on), treat your co-wives (if any) as your beloved friends; if your husband ever insults you, never turn hostile to him in a fit of anger. Be supremely compassionate to your servants and attendants and never get puffed up with pride in the midst of luxuries. It is through such a conduct that young women attain to the exalted rank of a housewife; while those acting otherwise prove a source of anxiety to their family and race."

The poet Kālidāsa has compressed in the above four lines the elaborate teachings of our scriptures on the subject of duties of a woman.

Some Sure and Easy Means to God-Realization

FAITH IN GOD'S EXISTENCE

It is possible to attain God through faith, though His nature may not be fully known. But the faith must be perfect. As the faith in His existence grows man approaches Him more and more. One may not have real knowledge of Him as with attributes or without attributes, as with form or without form, and yet may have faith that He exists and pervades everywhere; He is all-knowing and all-potent, supremely loving and supremely merciful and resides in our hearts and purifies sinners; that He watches all that we do and hears all that we speak and knows the working of our mind. With such a faith firmly established an aspirant cannot indulge in impious acts such as lying, fraud, theft, dishonesty, violence and sexual deviations. As the faith grows not only sinful acts will become impossible but all one's pious deeds such as the performance of sacrifices, charity, austerity, pilgrimages, fasts and vows, service, prayers, meditation, worship, study and recital of the scriptures, offering praises to the Deity, fellowship with saints and so on will be guided by His liking and performed in order to please Him. And the virtues favoured by God, such as forgiveness, mercy, calmness, equality, simplicity, contentment, devotion, knowledge, renunciation, etc., will fill his heart. Belief, charged with devotion, in the existence of God is called faith. When this faith becomes perfect through the understanding of the secret of Divine attributes, glory and essence then the aspirant's happiness and peacefulness continually grow in his heart. Sometimes horripilation is experienced, tears flow down freely and the heart is filled with joy; and at other times the aspirant is overwhelmed with the

pangs of separation. He feels, if there is God why should he be deprived of Him? So far as He is concerned everything is all right; the delay is caused by our weakness or imperfect practice and this is due to lack of faith, which proceeds from ignorance or folly.

It is, therefore, desirable to make firm our faith in His existence and to convince ourselves of the fact that He was attained by many, can be attained even in this age and every man has a right to this attainment. One should think, however undeserving one may be that the merciful God has given one the human body and with it bestowed the right to attain Him. Still if man fails to attain Him it should be a matter of shame and pain for him. Such thoughts if repeatedly entertained strengthen faith and devotion. This produces aspiration to meet Him, and when this aspiration becomes intensified separation from God becomes insufferable and ultimately man attains to Him. God also cannot help meeting him when his yearning becomes intense. How can God delay meeting him who becomes extremely eager to meet Him? It is, therefore, necessary to make our faith in His existence firmer day by day. This supreme belief in His existence when charged with devotion is real faith. And when this faith reaches its acme God is at once attained without a moment's delay. The only reason for the delay in our meeting Him is the weakness of our faith.

FAITH IN SAGES AND SCRIPTURES

Faith in sages and scriptures can also help in attaining God in the shortest time. Saints and scriptures both testify to the existence of God. The testimony of the sages is more authentic than that of the scriptures, because of former get His vision before they testify to His existence and they never utter an untruth. Those who can tell lies can never be accepted as saints. If the saints affirm God's existence and support it by scriptures then their affirmation is as good as the authority of the scriptures. But even if they made the affirmation without having recourse to the authority of the scriptures, then their words are no less authentic, but are even more powerful; for their assertion is based on experience and they would never make the affirmation without having had the vision of God.

Compliance with the wishes of sages not only makes one blessed but helps one to attain God undoubtedly. If the behests of the scriptures when followed make one blessed then it follows that one who moulds one's life according to the behests of the sages must also become blessed. But the condition is that there must be full faith in their words. Suppose a saint asked a presumptuous faithful person to give to a particular institution one bag of wheat and ten blankets, and the person, according to his own light, replied that blankets were not required and it was not the proper season for their use.Then the sage said, "Very well, then send only wheat." The man again replied, "At present the price of wheat is rather high in the locality and it was to come down, as in other places. So wheat would be sent when price falls." Then the sage only said, "Well then send wheat when you think proper." It is clear from this that the man had no faith in the sage, as he exercised his own judgment and did not obey the behest. The sage, having a balanced mind, easily complied with the man's wishes. This betokens lack of faith, and the little he has is of no value. Similarly compliance when convenient also betrays lack of faith. A man of real faith implicitly obeys the behest of a saint and carries it out cheerfully even when it is against his own wish. We have the example of the five brothers, Pāṇḍavas, who married Draupadī in obedience to their mother Kuntī's command and cheerfully disregarded the injunction of the scriptures in this respect. This is true faith.

In the *Ayodhyā-Kāṇḍa* of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* we find that when Śrī Rāmacandra Mahārāja went to His mother Kausalyā and told her that He was going to forest in obedience to His father's command, the mother said, "Father sends you to forest, but I command You not to go." Then Lord Śrī Rāma simply replied, "I have not the power to disobey father. I only ask your permission to go to forest." This shows what great faith Lord Rāma had in Daśaratha.

Once Āyodadhaumya Muni asked his disciple Āruṇi to stop the water which was flowing down the farm. Āruṇi tried his best to stop the water by raising barriers of mud, but his efforts proved

of no avail. He made the barrier but every time water washed it away. When he failed to stop the flow he laid himself down there and stopped the water with his body. After some time the master asked his pupils where was Āruṇi and they reminded him that he had sent him to stop water in the farm. Then the master said that Āruṇi had not returned for long so they should all go to find him out. So he went with his pupils to the place where Āruṇi was lying on the ground to stop water with his body. The master shouted to know where Āruṇi was and asked him to come. Then the pupil came to the master and said with folded hands that after trying in vain to stop the water he laid himself down to block the flow. Now that he was called, he rose up and left the place and bowed to his master. He wanted to know if he was to continue to stop water or do some other work. Then the master said that his name henceforth would be Uddālaka as he had tried to stop water, and added that he had obeyed his words literally and so he would become blessed and all the knowledge of the Vedas and scriptures would be acquired by him of its own accord. Having received this boon from his master, Āruṇi returned home and through faith was able to gain the knowledge of all the Vedas without regular study.

There was a Ṛṣi named Haridrumat Gautama. Satyakāma, the son of Jabālā, approached him and requested that he might be imparted the knowledge of Brahma. Gautama asked him, "What is your Gotra (caste according to family)?" He replied, "I asked my mother and she only told me that she used to serve his father but did not know the Gotra. That her name was Jabālā and his was Satyakāma." Gautama was pleased to hear this and said, "You are telling the truth and so you are a Brāhmaṇa, and from today your Gotra will be after the name of your mother." Then Gautama asked him to bring faggots for the sacrificial fire so that he may be given the sacred thread. Gautama then gave him a herd of four hundred cows and asked him to follow it. When driving the herd Satyakāma said that he would not return till the number of cows grew to one thousand. He went away to a forest and for years stayed there. When the number of kine became one

thousand a bull said to him that the cattle had reached the desired number and so the herd should return to Gautama. Satyakāma, while returning to his master with the herd and was on his way, was instructed by a bull in the first quarter of Brahma, in the second by Agni, in the third by Haṁsa and in the fourth and last by Madgu. In this manner he became a full knower of Brahma without any effort of his own. When he reached his preceptor with the cows Gautama noticed his peacefulness and the glow of knowledge on his face and remarked, "Satyakāma, your face shows that you have gained the knowledge of Brahma." He replied, "You are right, but I desire to learn from your lips also." Then the preceptor also instructed him. This is an example of perfect faith.

The command of the preceptor is to be cheerfully obeyed even when it is against one's own inclination. True faith shines forth when the command is extremely unpleasant to carry out and it is still obeyed with the greatest pleasure. As the commands grow more and more intolerably unpleasant and still submissive, unquestioning obedience, cheerfulness, peace etc., also continue to increase and when joy, enthusiasm and horripilation are experienced without limit and tears flow from the eyes, then faith may be taken to be perfect.

One who has such an urge to act according to the Master's wish, sign or command finds himself blessed in the shortest time. There should be no doubt about it. Similarly in obeying the injunctions of the scripture if such a sentiment prevails then it amounts to perfect faith in the scriptures.

INTENSE YEARNING TO MEET GOD

One may be leading a wicked and sinful life, but after hearing the glory of the Lord if intense longing to see Him is awakened in one's heart then the Lord ignoring one's sins and wickedness, can grant His vision without delay. Suppose there is a filthy child yearning to meet its mother who wants to embrace it after washing it clean, but the child cannot brook delay and is ignorant of the fact that its filthy condition is the cause of mother's delayed embrace and it continues to cry bitterly for mother. In such a condition the mother is compelled by the extreme impatience of

the child and her affection for it to gather it in her arms. But the love which the Lord has for us is a thousand times more intense than a mother has for her child. Then how can He delay meeting us? When devotion in the heart of a devotee becomes intense and his desire to meet the Lord becomes poignant, then without paying any heed to his faults and sins the Lord makes no delay in meeting him. A mother may be slow in washing her filthy child but in the eyes of the Lord there remain no sins in the devotee and consequently there can be no delay on His part. But the condition is that the devotee's yearning should be extremely intense, however sinful and wicked he may be. The Lord takes into account only intense love and yearning to meet Him and ignores everything else. It is, therefore, necessary for us to cultivate extreme eagerness and intense devotion for meeting Him. For this we should be prepared even to stake our lives.

DEPENDENCE ON THE LORD

Just as a kitten depends upon its mother, so should we, if not more, depend upon the Lord. A child of two years does not like to leave its mother even for a short time and completely depends upon her, whether she may strike it or love it. It knows none other than the mother and she alone is its support. Similarly, one who aspires for beatitude should completely rely upon the Lord for its attainment. The Lord may bring about fulfilment or treat him otherwise; that should be no concern of his, but he should depend upon Him for fulfilment. He should feel happy in all circumstances and whatever he is fated to experience, pleasure or pain, he should welcome it as a gift from the Lord. He should look upon all his actions as prompted by God and that they shape themselves according to His wishes. But one thing should be clearly understood that we cannot attribute our laziness to God nor can we make Him responsible for our transgressions, impious and selfish deeds. Where there is divine interference duty cannot be neglected and in the absence of selfish motive selfish deeds can never be indulged in; and of course, sinful actions become impossible; and where they do occur God has no hand in them, but it is the work of selfish desire.

Arjuna asked in the *Gītā:*—

अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।
अनिच्छन्नपि वार्ष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः ॥

(III.36)

"Now impelled by what, Kṛṣṇa, does this man commit sin even involuntarily, as though driven by force ?"

In reply to this Śrī Bhagavān said:—

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥

(III.37)

"It is desire, it is wrath, begotten of the element of Rajas, insatiable and grossly wicked; know this to be the enemy in this case."

Dependence on the Lord does not mean that one should childishly give up all work. In case of a child no duty is imposed as it has no knowledge of dutiful action, but one who has a sense of duty and still shuns action in the name of dependence upon God, it is madness. One who depends on the Lord becomes free from care, grief, fear, envy, excitement and other similar passions. He imbibes patience, courage, seriousness, fearlessness, peace, contentment and simplicity. As a matter of fact these virtues come to him without any conscious effort to cultivate them.

In order to attain God one should constantly repeat the divine Name and remember the divine Form while depending upon His grace. Whatever He does should be taken as His Sport which one should watch and feel happy.

A Plea for Selflessness on the Part of Women

It should be the sole objective of all to please the Lord and to act so as to gain His grace. Selfless service pleases everyone and what pleases all pleases the Lord. And by pleasing God in this way one can speedily realize Him.

There are two things to be remembered by women in their behaviour towards one another: firstly, how to make one's behaviour and conduct towards others pleasing to them; secondly, to recognize that God resides in the heart of all; that everyone is an image of the Lord, and therefore service rendered to anybody is service of the Lord. Keeping this in mind one must find opportunities of serving all in whatever way it may be possible.

As a selfish man constantly thinks of his own interest, so it should be our aim to think of serving others. To advance the interest of others is the highest kind of service. There are three ways of offering service:—(1) To serve faithfully with devotion all those men or women, who are superior to one's self in caste, position, age, knowledge or Āśrama (stage in life); (2) to serve those of equal status or age as a friend; (3) to serve all those who are of a lower status as if they were one's own children. Thus the prompting feeling should be respectively of service, friendship and parenthood. The first feeling may be illustrated by that prompting the service rendered by a wife to her husband, a son to his parents and a pupil to his teacher. The second one is illustrated by the affectionate regard or friendship borne towards one's equals; and the third is cherished towards dependants who are to be protected and looked after with affection. All the three feelings are prompted by one common aim and that is to please others through service. This promotes affection; and unselfish

love pleases the Lord. As a matter of fact, any service rendered to a person is service to the Lord Himself, when it is offered with this idea in mind. It purifies the mind and exerts a healthy influence on others as well. They also try to do likewise and follow his example. This in itself is a great service to humanity.

It is the duty of a woman to respect her mother-in-law and the wives of her husband's elder brothers more than her own mother. She should firmly believe that through their service she would be able to please God. This belief should prompt all her actions of service. She must do what pleases them, even contrary to her own inclinations, and give priority to their satisfaction. But if they induce her to any sinful action, she should never be drawn into it. Herself she may suffer and make sacrifices for their satisfaction but should never obey them in committing any sinful deed, because obedience on such an occasion is harmful to them also. One who prompts a sinful deed and one who obeys the prompting both go to hell. And, therefore, violence, theft, lying and adultery etc., even when ordered by any authority, should never be indulged in. Disobedience on such occasions saves even the authority from falling into hell. Never mind if disobedience itself may result in hell-torture. But it should be borne in mind that a disobeying woman, saving her prompters from hell, can never be forced into hell.

Bharata was an embodiment of self-sacrifice and he did not carry out the improper demand of his mother. This did not result in any evil consequence for him. He said in Citrakūṭa that he had gone there disregarding the clear injunctions of his parents, preceptor and others, and still he was being praised by Śrī Rāma. He exemplifies a noble ideal. He was asked to occupy the throne but it did not appear proper to him to obey them and he disregarded their wishes. Similarly, Bali also did not obey his preceptor and yet he was not sent to hell. On the other hand, a very high status was bestowed upon him. When Prahlāda, the great devotee of the Lord, was commanded by his father to give up worshipping God, he did not obey him and continued to suffer tortures, and accepted calmly all the cruel punishments to which

he was mercilessly subjected. Similarly we should obey our elders and superior persons in all matters, but never obey them if they ask us to go against God and religion. Disobedience is justified on such occasions to save them from hell-fire. And it is no sin to go against their express sinful commands.

As regards those who are your friends and are of the same age or equal status and for whom you cherish affection in your heart, you should try in an unselfish manner to serve their interests and please them. Serving them in this manner purifies one's mind and good behaviour exerts a healthy influence upon them, improving their moral stature.

Those who happen to be inferior to us in rank or position should be protected, nourished and instructed and encouraged to take part in healthy sports and amusements. They should receive parental affection from us. Women should thus serve the children of their husband's cousins and brothers more than their own. Similarly the children of one's brothers and cousins should receive more affectionate attention than one's own. Fruits, sweets, toys etc., should be given to them before they are given to one's own children.

A mother-in-law should receive greater attention and higher regard than one's own mother. If one's own mother is disobeyed on any occasion it may not matter much; but to ignore a mother-in-law is a matter of consequence, as it pains her. She should therefore be implicitly obeyed. A devotee of God carefully does everything in a manner so as to please Him as early as possible; similarly a married woman should concern herself all the time to please her father-in-law, mother-in-law and other elderly people of the family. Her service to them should be unselfish and rendered with the feeling that the Lord resides in them all and He is watching her actions and feels delighted by her attitude.

A mother-in-law should realize that her son's wife has come to this house leaving her parents and so she is entitled to a greater regard and affection than her own daughter. If there is any difference between her own daughter and son's wife, she should

side with and support the latter. A daughter is seldom angry with her mother; she knows that mother is mother and would do nothing against her. But a son's wife cannot easily take such a view of things, and she is likely to feel that the mother-in-law is partial to her daughter. Even when similar treatment is accorded to one's own daughter and son's wife, the latter would feel that the mother is partial to the former. It is therefore, necessary that she should, without prejudice, incline to support her daughter-in-law.

If one happens to be an arbitrator between two parties, one of whom consists of one's own brothers, even justice would be looked upon as partial and favourable to the relations. In such a case if the arbitrator were to support the just claim of the other party and keep silent when one's own people were to press their just point of view, then the former party would be so influenced that it would become favourably inclined towards the relations of the arbitrator. Thus the party would be won over and would feel like one's relations.

There is one thing which has to be emphasized. Women should not put pressure upon men for things they may like to have. When visiting one's parents the best thing would be to ask for nothing. One should try to take less than what is presented or offered. This should be followed as a principle. Similarly, in her husband's home she should try to accept less than what is given to her by her father-in-law and mother-in-law. It is better to refuse presents and get them for others whose need may be greater. Let sisters have more than herself. Such an attitude promotes affection and leaves no room for quarrels and bickerings.

Our words must be truthful, sweet, wholesome and brief. They must be charged with meaning. Useless gossip should always be avoided. Harshness and untruth should not disfigure our speech. Words giving offence to anybody should not be used. Our speech should be sincere, sweet, truthful and wholesome.

A woman should never remain idle. For spiritual advancement it is necessary to keep the body engaged in useful work. An idle woman is spoiled by sloth. There is no knowing when the body

may drop down dead. It is incumbent, therefore, that remembering the Lord constantly the body may be kept engaged in useful and proper activity without injuring others. Proper activity should constantly be sought for.

Life should be simple. Relations should not be asked to supply luxurious clothes and ornaments. No pressure should be brought to bear upon them for these articles. Whatever they can afford to give with a cheerful heart should be accepted with contentment and attempt should always be made to take less than what is offered. The spirit of renunciation should be so exercised that it may influence others also and they too may show similar spirit of unselfishness. Renunciation is a very potent and effective factor. It teaches a precious lesson to others also and makes them realize its value and they begin to practise it.

It is undoubted that unselfish behaviour has a similar response from others. But one should not behave like this only in a responsive manner, but should go so far as to behave nicely with one who does evil. Ladies are advised to bear this in mind and make it a practical proposition.

One should never needlessly malign or bear tales against another woman; and even if a lady does suffer from a fault, one should never speak of it. Of course, in the event of her inquiring about it and insisting on her being told of it and if as a result of her being told of it she is expected to mend herself and provided further that she does not take offence, there is no objection to your telling her about it. But as far as possible one should refrain from revealing it without being asked to do so. If there is any excellent quality in a woman, it can certainly be made known; but such a quality must actually exist in her. It is not at all advisable to speak of imaginary virtues.

One should never try to humiliate another nor should one ever cherish such intention in one's mind. Much less should one insult another woman; on the other hand, one should strive to do good to all. But, having rendered some service to another lady, one should never mention it to anybody nor should it be cherished in one's mind. For a service cherished in one's mind tickles one's

vanity and, mentioned to another, it gets neutralized. If anyone else ill-treats you, you should never revile her; on the contrary, you should do her some good office in return. Such a behaviour is most exalted and beneficent.

Your behaviour towards anyone should be characterized by a spirit of renunciation, humility, love and magnanimity. Such a behaviour is sure to have a most salutary effect on those with whom you have to deal and they too improve. When God Himself is pleased and realized through excellent behaviour, it is incumbent on us to behave ideally towards all; for of what use will this body, wealth and power be to us when we are no more in this world? To cultivate friendship with anybody in order to serve our own private ends or to achieve our own purpose is no friendship at all. We should make friends with another for the latter's good alone. Exalted souls cultivate friendship with others only for the good of the latter. Recognizing this friendly behaviour on the part of exalted souls as their ideal, our mothers and sisters should make friends with all in a purely disinterested spirit for the good of the latter alone.

If you own some excellent possession, you should allow your friend to take a large share of it; and in order to avoid hurting her susceptibilities you should accept her things too, when there is occasion for it, even though sparingly. Supposing, for instance, that your friend sends some fruits, say mangoes, to you, accept some of them and return the rest. While sending your own present to her in your turn, make it a point to send articles, say, four times more valuable than hers and of course useful to her. If you are in possession of articles of daily use and if your friend is not as well-off as you are, you should continue to send to her house articles of food and wearing apparel on some pretext or other. If she declines to accept them, you should personally call on her and importunately induce her to accept them; and, in order to please her, you should take in return something of a lesser value belonging to her. For example, suppose you find some new towels lying in your friend's house. Take a couple of them saying they look very decent; and send her in return a Sari

or other articles of wearing apparel worth, say, ten rupees. If she raises any scruples, try to reconcile her by reminding her of your having taken a pair of towels from her house the other day, and urging that, you and she being intimate friends, what belongs to you is as much hers as yours. Again, suppose you find beaten rice being parched in your friend's house. Take a handful from her and help yourself to them, saying they are very delicious. For you must find some excuse to send some articles of food worth, say, ten rupees to her house. In this way, whenever you call on her and find her stock of provisions deficient in some respect, try to replenish it by supplying articles which are lacking. And if she raises any objections, try to meet them in the same way, arguing that she should not differentiate her things from yours. Nay, you should cherish that very feeling in your heart and should supply her needs, not out of compassion or in a spirit of commiseration treating her as indigent, but because she is your friend and therefore viewing her needs as your own and recognizing her claim on your possessions as well as on yourself.

If ever there is an occasion for taking her things, you must take as little as possible and that too for her gratification so that she may raise no scruples in accepting anything that may hereafter be offered to her by you. You should accept her things in this spirit alone and not in a selfish spirit. Selfishness is rampant everywhere in the world and need not be inculcated or taught. It is the lesson of selflessness that requires to be drummed into the masses. That alone is conducive to Liberation. Renunciation has been declared by the Lord as more valuable even than contemplation. He proclaims in the latter half of XII. 12 of *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*:—

ध्यानात् कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम् ॥

"Renunciation of the fruit of one's actions or, in other words, disinterested or selfless work is higher even than meditation; for from such renunciation immediately follows peace of mind."

It is the elimination of selfishness that is sought to be conveyed

by the word 'renunciation' in this context. It is this spirit of selflessness that is of supreme importance in every field of activity.

This frail body is perishable. It is the height of folly to lavish money on nourishing or beautifying it.That money should be devoted to the service of the distressed, the needy and the forlorn. Every effort should be made to overcome attachment for the money that we have in our possession and which should ever be put to the best use possible. For, when we depart from this world, we shall leave behind all our possessions and there is no knowing what will be their fate. We have been afforded this opportunity only for a short time; it is not going to stay long. Hence we should avail ourselves of it before it is too late. In the end this body as well as this power and pelf will cease to be. Whatever is owned by us today is soon going to part from us. Even as time is rolling by, all these things are also drifting with time. They will not endure in spite of our best efforts. When our body is not going to survive, much less will its belongings last. Hence all these things should be utilized in the service of God manifested in the form of the world.

Everyone of our mothers and sisters should remember that this body is soon going to perish, that one day it will be reduced to ashes. Hence before it is burnt to ashes it should be used to the best advantage in the service of God appearing in the form of the universe, so that our birth as a human being may be fulfilled. One should feel the same satisfaction in serving all as one would feel in serving the Lord; for all are images or shrines of God. Hence service to the cosmos is virtually the same as service rendered to the Lord. It is this kind of disinterested or selfless service that goes by the name of disinterested action. The mind gets most speedily purified and genuine love for God enhanced through such disinterested action. Hence all our movements should be intended to please the Lord.

We appeal to our mothers and sisters to accord such treatment to their children as may conduce to their best interests. The interest of the latter obviously lies in their acquiring knowledge

and building an excellent moral character. Hence they should be imparted the highest learning and good moral instruction. If the parents bear a good moral character, their progeny too are bound to be morally good. Good morals should be most scrupulously placed before our children in the form of exemplary conduct; then alone can healthy moral influence be exerted on them. If you continue to tell lies and practise deceit, thieving and adultery and ask your children to speak the truth, observe a vow of strict non-violence and continence and abstain from thieving, your precept alone will carry no weight. What you are required to do, therefore, is to set a noble example before them and then instruct them accordingly.

Widowed mothers and sisters would be well-advised to lead an absolutely pure, abstentious and unworldly life and completely eschew luxuries and comforts, lickerishness and smartness, mirth and coquetry. Asceticism should be their watchword. They should practise control of mind and senses. Nay, they should avoid the very sight and shun the company of such ladies as are given to luxuries and comforts, lickerishness and smartness and so on. A widow should feel that the latter are sunk in worldliness and are wasting their precious life. She should not therefore throw away her life by cultivating their fellowship. Widows should particularly spend their time in adoration and contemplation, worship and recital of sacred texts, prayer and singing praises to the Lord, as well as in rendering disinterested service as enjoined by the scriptures. They should always take the best possible work for their body.

It is obligatory on those whose husband is alive to serve their widowed sisters and gratify them with a sincere heart. Whosoever oppresses a widow meets with a downfall in this world, is subjected to calumny and is cast into terrible hell after death.

Widows should themselves refrain from attending functions of a purely Rājasika (mundane) character such as weddings and betrothals and should scrupulously avoid secular festivities, musical performances etc. Of course, there is no objection to

their joining religious and devotional congregations and attending spiritual discourses. On the other hand, they will be profited thereby. But whenever they are required to stir out-of-doors, even to attend a religious function, they must always be accompanied by their own people, whether of their husband's family or of their parents' home; under no circumstances should they venture out alone. A lady who moves freely all by herself exposes herself to the risk of moral degradation. Hence ladies should never move freely out-of-doors.

Manu says:—

बाल्ये पितुर्वशे तिष्ठेत् पाणिग्राहस्य यौवने।
पुत्राणां भर्तरि प्रेते न भजेत् स्त्री स्वतन्त्रताम्॥

(V. 48)

"A woman should remain under the control of her father during her childhood, of her husband in her youth and of her (adult) sons when her husband is no more (or of her husband's relatives if she has no adult sons). On no account should she enjoy freedom."

It should be borne in mind that in the event of a master perpetrating a sin, its evil consequences are not shared by his dependants. Similarly, if a husband commits a sin, its consequences are not shared by his wife; for she is dependent on her husband. But if a wife goes astray, the evil consequences of her transgression are shared half and half by her husband, who lords it over her. On the other hand, a faithful wife gets one half of the merit earned by her husband by virtue of a meritorious act performed by him. But a wife who is not amenable to the control of her husband does not get this share. That wife alone who is devoted to her husband and stands by him through thick and thin receives an equal share of his merit.

Hence wives whose husband is alive should strive till the last moment of their life to observe the rules of conjugal fidelity.

Disinterested Action Coupled with Devotion as a Means to God-Realization

There are two ways open to a striver for redeeming his soul: (1) the Pravṛtti-Mārga (the path of worldly activity) and (2) the Nivṛtti-Mārga (the path of cessation from worldly activity). Pravṛtti-Mārga consists in seeking Liberation through activity as Janaka did; while the followers of Nivṛtti-Mārga seek release through renunciation of activity after the example of the sage Sanaka and his three brothers. It should not, however, be understood that Nivṛtti-Mārga connotes the order of recluses alone. It is no doubt true that the order of recluses represents the path of Nivṛtti; but a householder too can follow the paths of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti both. In the case of a householder, to follow the path of Nivṛtti would mean living in seclusion in a forest or a mountain-cave like an anchorite, withdrawing from all mundane and social activities and business dealings etc., practising adoration and meditation, attending religious discourses and studying sacred books and spending one's time in the ecstasy of Self-Knowledge and dispassion, taking care not to accept the means of subsistence such as food and covering for the body from anyone else than one's own people. This is as good as renunciation. This type of Nivṛtti-Mārga can be followed even by a householder. This is what they call Nivṛtti in Pravṛtti.

If, on the other hand, a Saṁnyāsī (recluse) extends the sphere of his worldly activity, that may be called Pravṛtti in Nivṛtti, which leads to one's downfall. On the part of a Saṁnyāsī, to have anything to do with gold and women, and further to associate with them, that is to say, to own wealth and cohabit with a woman or even to take service from a woman constitutes a blot on his character; for love of women and money, nay their very touch leads him to perdition. We read in the *Skandapurāṇa:*—

वराटके संगृहीते यत्र तत्र दिने दिने।
गोसहस्त्रवधं पापं श्रुतिरेषा सनातनी॥
हृदि सस्नेहभावेन चेद् द्रक्ष्येत् स्त्रियमेकदा।
कोटिद्वयं ब्रह्मकल्पं कुम्भीपाकी न संशयः॥

(*Kāśī-Pūrvārdha*, XXXXI 25, 27)

"Even in the event of cowries being collected by a Saṁnyāsī at various places from day to day, the sin of slaughtering a thousand cows attaches to him; such is the eternal command of the Vedas. Again, if he regards a woman with a feeling of love in his heart, he will doubtless rot in the hell called Kumbhīpāka for two crores of Kalpas (day of Brahmā)."

The duty of a Saṁnyāsī is indeed very hard and it is most undesirable on the part of a monk or a recluse to erect buildings, to accept women as disciples and live in seclusion with them and to have extensive worldly dealings such as business transactions like householders.

On a householder completing fifty years of his life the scriptures ordain that he should leave his home and, taking to the life of a hermit, dwell in the forest. If his wife chooses to remain with him, he may allow her to live with him. But the couple must ever lead a life of self-restraint; both must practise austerities in the forest and strive according to the injunctions of the Śāstras for their spiritual good. To light fires on all the four sides and sit in their midst with the sun burning right over one's head during the four summer months; to sit in the open air and remain exposed to showers during the four rainy months and to remain under water below the neck or in wet clothes during the four wintry months; and to observe strict continence and repose on the ground in separate beds at night—these are some of the duties of an anchorite. It is further laid down that a hermit should bathe thrice everyday (namely, both morning and evening as well as at midday), propitiate the gods and the manes with libations of water and to emaciate his body by practising austerities of the severest type. The *Manusmṛti* says:—

ग्रीष्मे पञ्चतपास्तु स्याद् वर्षास्वभ्रावकाशकः।
आर्द्रवासास्तु हेमन्ते क्रमशो वर्धयंस्तपः॥

उपस्पृशंस्त्रिषवणं पितॄन् देवांश्च तर्पयेत् ।
तपश्चरंश्चोग्रतरं शोषयेद् देहमात्मनः ॥

The *Manusmṛti* further says:—

अप्रयत्नः सुखार्थेषु ब्रह्मचारी धराशयः ।
शरणेष्वममश्चैव वृक्षमूलनिकेतनः ॥

(VI. 25)

"An ascetic should make no effort to secure comforts and, observing strict continence, should sleep on the ground. He should have no attachment to habitations and should rather stay at the foot of trees."

As in the case of the order of recluses, it is very difficult in these days to discharge the obligations attaching to the order of anchorites too. Hence in this Kali age he too who does not take to the life of a hermit but chooses to remain a householder and practises devotion living like one who has renounced all worldly activities can easily attain blessedness; for God-Realization is open to all human beings without distinction. Everyone can realize God, no matter if one is a male or female, young or old, a celibate or a householder, an anchorite or a recluse, and, even among the householders, whether he is a Brāhmaṇa or a Kṣatriya, a Vaiśya or a Śūdra or even a pariah. The Lord unequivocally says in the *Gītā*:—

मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः ।
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ॥

(IX. 32)

"Indeed women, Vaiśyas (members of the trading and agriculture classes), Śūdras (those belonging to the labouring and artisan classes), as well as those of sinful birth (such as the pariah), whoever they may be —taking refuge in Me, O Arjuna, they too attain the supreme goal,"

Thus it is proved beyond doubt that all human beings are qualified for taking refuge in the Lord, as well as for God-Realization. Much more qualified are the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas, the topmost among all the Varṇas or grades of society.

The Lord says:—

किं पुनर्ब्राह्मणाः पुण्या भक्ता राजर्षयस्तथा।
अनित्यमसुखं लोकमिमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम्॥

(IX. 33)

"How much more qualified, then, are holy Brāhmaṇas and royal sages devoted to Me. Therefore, having obtained this joyless and transient human birth, constantly worship Me."

This utterance of the Lord proves the superiority of the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas. It further proves that even though continuing as a householder and given to worldly activity, a man can attain blessedness by virtue of his devotion to the Lord. Similarly one can attain blessedness even through Karmayoga (disinterested action) while continuing to tread the path of worldly activity. The Lord says:—

अनाश्रितः कर्मफलं कार्यं कर्म करोति यः।
स संन्यासी च योगी च न निरग्निर्न चाक्रियः॥

(*Gītā* VI.1)

"He who does his duty without expecting the fruit of actions is a Saṁnyāsī (Sāṅkhyayogī) and a Yogī (Karmayogī) both. He is no Saṁnyāsī (renouncer), who has merely renounced the sacred fire; even so he is no Yogī, who has merely given up all activity."

Suppose a Vaiśya, who is a trader by profession, is running a shop. It may be asked here: How is that man to carry on his business ? Our reply to this question is that the kind of business he is engaged in requires no change. Let him continue to deal in whatever commodity he is dealing in, no matter whether it is foodgrains and condiments, textiles and yarn, gold and silver or clarified butter, oil, sugar and so on. No blemish attaches to this kind of business; for the buying and selling of goods is enjoined on a Vaiśya by the Śāstras. Of course, he must carry on this business as a sacred duty truthfully and in a disinterested spirit, dealing in the same manner with all.

In the *Śāntiparva* of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa* of the *Padmapurāṇa* we read how Tulādhāra, who was a Vaiśya by caste, dealt in all kinds of liquids such as clarified butter, oil, milk and so on, excluding, of course, impure substances like spirituous

liquor. His dealings, however, were completely divorced from untruth, deceit, differential treatment and greed. His mind having been purified by virtue of such dealings, he attained God-Realization.

Instead of dealing differently with different people, that is to say, fairly with some and unfairly with others, we should have uniform dealings with all and must abstain in our business transactions from falsehood, deceit, thieving, dishonesty, perfidy etc., under all circumstances. Far from attaining final beatitude one is sure to meet with damnation through business characterized by falsehood, deceit, dishonesty, breach of faith and so on. The spirit of disinterestedness or selflessness in our business-dealings is the only valuable recipe conducive to spiritual good. The feeling of disinterestedness is such a powerful remedy that it uproots falsehood, deceit, dishonesty and all other vices. Hence an intelligent man should do his work in a disinterested spirit alone. To eliminate from one's actions egotism, the feeling of mineness, attachment and the expectation for their reward and so on—this is what is meant by selflessness. Disinterestedness (Karmayoga) is no other than this and it is this disinterestedness which brings final beatitude in its train. The Lord says:—

विहाय कामान् यः सर्वान् पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥

(*Gītā* II.71)

"He who has given up all desires and moves free from attachment, egotism and the thirst for enjoyment attains (supreme and lasting) peace."

Disinterestedness is of various kinds. Of all these varieties, 'Action for the sake of the Lord' is an exalted type of disinterestedness. A Vaiśya, for instance, who is carrying on business-transactions should arrive at the conclusion that the shop which he is running belongs to the Lord, that he himself is a servant of the Lord and that all the commodities kept for sale also belong to the Lord. Thus recognizing everything as belonging to the Lord, he should always positively believe that he is a servant of the Lord and that it is for service alone that he has been employed; that the food

and clothing he is getting are his only remuneration; that all the members of his household are the Lord's own people and that service rendered to them is service of the Lord Himself. While engaged in the service of the Lord in the shape of work relating to the shop, he should believe that the Lord's shop is intended for the service of the entire living creation; for all the living beings of the universe are subjects of the Lord or His progeny. The Lord is immensely pleased by the service rendered to all in the form of doing them a good turn through our business, looking upon all as His subjects or offspring as suggested above.

There is a course of discipline even higher than this and one can attain blessedness still more speedily by following that course in a disinterested spirit. That superior course of discipline is to view God as present in all and to serve all in this light. God pervades the whole universe in the same way as ether permeates clouds. Realizing this, one should render service to God in the shape of serving all. By rendering service in this way one is able to attain God-Realization in the form of final beatitude, which is the highest consummation of life. The Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम्।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः॥

(XVIII. 46)

"Man attains the highest perfection by worshipping through his own natural duties Him from Whom the tide of creation has streamed forth and by Whom all this universe is pervaded."

There is a conception still higher than the conception of God being present in all. It is this that Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself stands manifested in the form of all. By serving all through one's business as Nārāyaṇa Himself the mind can get purified very soon, bringing God-Realization in its train.

If any fellow-dealer in our merchandise calls at our shop, we should serve him through our business, showing great courtesy and respect to him as though Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself had called on us. If we purchase any goods from anyone, our foremost thought should be that he must be benefited through us in some way. Similarly, if we sell any goods to him we should be prompted

by the feeling that the Lord Himself has kindly called on us, so that it is our foremost duty to serve Him and innocently place before Him the real mercantile position in regard to that commodity in order that he may not be misled, and should sell that commodity to him at a reasonable price.

In the same way if someone is working in an institution in which as a matter of fact none has got any personal interest and which should accordingly be almost free from the vice of falsehood and deceit, the worker in question need not effect any particular change in his work, for the work itself being intended for the service of the public, there is no occasion whatsoever for selfishness, lying and deceit, nay, not even for differential treatment. If, however, due to his habitual weakness the vice of lying, deceit and differential treatment ever appears in him, it will not be so difficult to uproot it; it can be corrected even with a little effort. Only one should persuade oneself again and again that the work he is doing is the Lord's own work. The weaknesses will then automatically disappear. The situation is, however, altogether different. Although we repeat by word of mouth that the work we are engaged in is the Lord's own work, we have not yet fully realized this fact. Had we undoubtedly grasped this truth we would have recognized every movement to be the Lord's own pastime and every living being to be a manifestation of the Lord; nay, every act of ours being realized as a service rendered to the Lord, our mind would have been flooded with an ecstasy of joy and peace every moment during the hours of work. While engaged in service we should feel that we are serving the Lord in accordance with His injunctions and with the materials supplied by Him. If every small detail of work is being done in the proper way, very little external reform is needed in it. A work that has considerably degenerated requires a good deal of reform; while that which has undergone a lesser degree of degeneration can be reformed with a little effort. It is not at all difficult to reform the work of an institution devoted to public good, which does not practise thieving or dishonesty in any form. Nevertheless, if it is guilty anywhere of the slightest contravention of the scriptural

injunctions, it is advisable to mend this flaw speedily. Of course what really matters is that we should render disinterested service to all, looking upon all as so many manifestations of the Lord. The Lord Himself says:—

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान् मां प्रपद्यते।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः॥

(*Gītā* VII. 19)

"In the very last of a series of births the enlightened soul worships Me, realizing that all this is God. Such an exalted soul is most difficult to find."

Hence one should serve all, looking upon them as so many manifestations of the Divine Reality. Nay, one should do everything in accordance with the divine injunctions; for he alone is a true lover of God who obeys His commandments. In the course of His sermon to the people of Ayodhyā, Lord Śrī Rāma Himself says in the *Uttara-Kāṇḍa* of *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa:*—

"He is My servant and he alone is the most beloved of Me, who obeys My command." *

In the *Gītā* too, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna:—

भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम्॥

(IV. 3)

"Arjuna, you are My devotee and (beloved) friend and what I have told you is a sovereign secret."

The Lord proclaims Arjuna His devotee and friend; for he combined in himself the attitude of a servant as well as that of a friend. What the Lord seeks to convey by this assertion is that he alone is His friend and lover, who obeys His command. Arjuna was a devotee of the highest type vowed to obedience. That is why at the end of His sermon in the eighteenth discourse the Lord asks Arjuna whether his infatuation was gone and whether he listened to His talk with rapt attention or not. Arjuna gives the following reply to His query:—

---

* सो सेवक प्रियतम मम सोई। मम अनुसासन मानइ जोई॥

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।
स्थितोऽस्मि गतसंदेहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥

(*Gītā* XVIII. 73)

"Krṣṇa, by Your grace my infatuation has fled and wisdom has been gained by me. I stand shorn of all doubts. I will do Your bidding."

Arjuna was an eminent devotee of the Lord. That is why He chose Arjuna in particular as an occasion for His sermon in the form of the *Gītā,* which was intended to benefit the whole world; and Arjuna too spent the rest of his life in accordance with His injunctions. Hence, treating Arjuna as our ideal, we should follow the divine injunctions. Here it may be urged that the Lord was bodily manifest before the world in those days, hence it was easy to obey His commands. At present, however, He is not so manifest; how, then, can it be possible to follow His behests? To this our reply is that everything depends on our mental attitude. The Lord continues to guide the conscience of the man who looks upon the teachings of the *Gītā* as His commandments. If before embarking on any undertaking we mentally approach the Lord and seek His advice, the Lord, who indwells all hearts, is sure to guide us through the promptings of conscience.

The Lord instructs us through three agencies: (1) through saints and holy men, (2) through bonafide scriptures and (3) through the guileless mind of the striving soul himself. Hence to follow the behests of a saint is as good as to obey the commands of the Lord Himself; for the Lord Himself says in verse 18 of Discourse VII that an enlightened soul is His very self—'ज्ञानी त्वात्मैव मे मतम्'. Hence there is no difficulty in our way, although such enlightened souls are very rare. There is scarce one such soul in millions. The Lord says in the *Gītā:*—

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद् यतति सिद्धये ।
यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ॥ (VII. 3)

"Hardly one among thousands of men strives to realize Me; of those striving Yogīs, again, some rare soul (devoting himself exclusively to Me) is able to know Me in reality."

Such being the case, it should be borne in mind that for our

purposes he alone is an exalted soul, from whom we get good counsel, through whose teachings we develop divine virtues and the characteristics of those who have realized God. Suppose there is one who is yet a striver but who is adorned with ideal virtues and has an exemplary conduct. In other words, he has divine traits mainifested in him and has sufficiently advanced on the path of God-Realization. In that case if we follow his behests, taking him to be a saint, we shall undoubtedly be benefited thereby. Such a striver is as good as a Mahātmā; for in *Gītā* IX. 13 by indirect application the word 'Mahātmā' has been used even with reference to striving souls. The Lord says:—

महात्मानस्तु मां पार्थ दैवीं प्रकृतिमाश्रिताः ।
भजन्त्यनन्यमनसो ज्ञात्वा भूतादिमव्ययम् ॥

"On the other hand, O Arjuna, great souls who have embraced the divine nature, worship Me constantly with none else in mind, knowing Me to be the fundamental source of all lives and the imperishable Eternal."

Hence there is no difficulty at all for us. Real saints are not lacking in the world. By the grace of God such a saint is actually found by him who sincerely wishes to meet one. Of course, one must have faith in one's heart.

Secondly the word of the Śāstras is the word of God Himself. Hence the injunctions of the Śāstras should be treated as divine commandments. The *Gītā,* the *Rāmāyaṇa,* the *Mahābhārata,* the Upaniṣads, the Vedas and the Smṛtis, the *Bhāgavata* and the other Purāṇas and all other genuine scriptures are really speaking the injunctions of God; while the *Gītā* constitutes the very word of His mouth. The Vedas have no doubt been revealed by Brahmā; but, truly speaking, they are the commandments of God Himself. And whatever has been uttered by the sages and seers is undoubtedly based on the Vedas; hence their utterances too are the utterances of God and God alone.

Thirdly, if we feel assured that the Lord is ever present in our heart, we can seek His advice in all matters and He too can give us proper advice or command through the promptings of conscience. If we consult Him in good faith, we can easily secure

His behest through our guileless heart.

As a matter of fact we should follow the divine injunctions in our life. It is not correct to say that the Lord was bodily present when He delivered His sermon to Arjuna but He is not so at the present moment. The Lord is ever present everywhere and in every substance. Hence to him who is endowed with faith and reverence, God is available at every time and at every place. Bearing this in mind, we should obey the commands of God. The principal injunction of the Lord is that we should render service to the whole world. For the entire creation, animate and inanimate, is a manifestation of God; there is no substance other than God, and God alone is the maker of the universe. In other words, God is both the material and efficient cause of the world. Therefore he who serves the world, looking upon it as a manifestation of God, actually serves the Lord. For him who comes to see God in all in the aforesaid manner, service of all is an extremely easy course of discipline. Hence we should fulfil our human life by serving all in a disinterested spirit.

God is extremely kind to us in that facilities of every description are available to us. In the first place human birth itself is a rare privilege. If one is invested with a human body, birth on the Indian soil, which is specially favourable for Liberation, is very difficult. Even for one who is born on the Indian soul faith in the tenets of the eternal Vedic Religion is exceedingly difficult and if one is endowed with such faith, knowledge of the Śāstras is still more difficult. And even if one acquires some knowledge of the Śāstras, the fellowship of saints is something very rare. If we enjoy all these privileges and yet fail to realize God due to lack of Sādhana (personal endeavour), there can be no greater fool than us. Taking all these facts into consideration we should fulfil our human life as early as possible; for the continuance of our body is not assured even for a moment. If death overtakes us this very day, we shall have to depart from this world. The span of our life cannot be extended even for a moment. Under such circumstances we should never remain off our guard. We should carry out the Lord's behests, remembering Him every moment of

our life. Such is the conclusion of the *Gītā*. In verse 7 of Discourse VIII, the Lord says:—

तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयम् ॥

"Therefore, O Arjuna, think of Me at all times and fight as well. With mind and reason thus given to Me, you will doubtless come to Me."

Arjuna happened to be a Kṣatriya (a member of the warrior class). Hence the Lord asked him to fight while thinking of Him at all times. Similarly He enjoins the pursuits of agriculture, the rearing of cows and trade on a Vaiśya (a member of the trading and agricultural class) and service (of the other classes) on a Śūdra (a member of the labouring and artisan class), and further proclaims that whoever renders service to Him through his own calling attains the highest perfection (in the form of God-Realization). Bearing this in mind, we should worship God in a disinterested spirit through our own duty. To entertain in one's intellect at all times the conclusion about the existence of God—this is what is meant by offering one's reason to God; and to think of Him at all times with one's mind according to the above conclusion of the intellect—this is what is meant by giving one's mind to the Lord. Such an act of offering one's mind and reason to the Lord ensures God-Realization.

It stands to reason that one gets liberated by relinquishing all one's duties and practising contemplation on and adoration of God in seclusion. But one could easily doubt the proposition that Mukti could be had even while attending to one's duties all the time. In order to set at rest such a doubt the Lord unequivocally declares in the second half of the verse quoted above that a devotee is sure to attain to Him even though engaged in pursuits like warfare if his mind and reason stand consecrated to Him. He makes Himself all the more explicit in the following verse:—

सर्वकर्माण्यपि सदा कुर्वाणो मद्व्यपाश्रयः।
मत्प्रसादादवाप्नोति शाश्वतं पदमव्ययम् ॥

(*Gītā* XVIII. 56)

"The Karmayogī, however, who depends on Me, attains by My

grace the eternal imperishable state, even though performing all actions at all times."

He who is active at all times while depending on the Lord must feel while doing his work that the work he is engaged in is the Lord's own work, that the service he is doing is service rendered to the Lord; that everybody and everything he has to deal with in the course of his duty is a manifestation of God and whatever is happening is a pastime of the Lord; that he is a servant of the Lord, while the Lord is his master and that it is so very kind of the Lord that He is using him as His tool for that work and taking service from him. In this way we should render service to all, looking upon all as so many manifestations of the divine Reality. Whether this kind of service is being actually rendered by us or not can be judged by this criterion alone that the moment such service comes to be rendered by us in a disinterested spirit our mind will be rid of all morbidities in the shape of attraction and aversion, joy and grief and so on.

Suppose there is a manager in a mercantile firm carrying on the transactions of that firm in the name and on behalf of its proprietor. The manager has nothing to do with the gain or loss of the firm, which is the sole concern of the proprietor. The manager is a mere instrument. If we likewise regard ourselves as a mere instrument and ascribe the gain and loss of our family to the Lord, we shall neither conceive attachment for nor aversion towards anyone. Whatever is done in the capacity of a servant of the Lord is of very great moment. Only so long as we do a piece of work as our personal concern, we are liable to attraction, and aversion, joy and grief and other such morbidities. When we do a thing as a work of God, we are freed from these morbidities and are able to realize God.

Therefore, whether it is one's personal work or that of any organization of which he is an active member, it should be done as the Lord's own work. No matter whether we work as a paid servant or as an honorary worker, our motive should be disinterested. In that case our being a paid or honorary servant will make no difference so far as the principle of disinterestedness

is concerned. If a man is really without any means of living and after rendering service to the Lord accepts something as a token of His grace for bare maintenance, he is not at fault; for, as a matter of fact, whatever there is in the world belongs to the Lord. Wherever we may be taking our food, if we take it as a Prasāda, the remnant of an offering made to the Lord, it turns out to be such. If, on the other hand, we do not believe it as such, it is not.

Hence we should be positive in our belief that whatever exists in the world belongs to God, that we too are God's and that the entire creation, both animate and inanimate, is a manifestation of God. Inspired by this feeling, we should cheerfully render service to all. When actually engaged in service we should occasionally experience a thrill of excessive delight, our hair should stand on end and tears should drop from our eyes.

Suppose for a moment that the Lord actually appears in our midst and that we are afforded an opportunity to render personal service to Him. Just imagine what ineffable joy and tranquillity of mind we should experience at that time. We are sure to experience the same amount of joy and peace the moment we actually come to believe that everything here is a manifestation of God and that it is Him that we are serving.

When we firmly believe that whatever exists is a manifestation of the supreme Reality we can speedily realize God by virtue of our disinterested service to that supreme Spirit. That is indeed a most exalted course of spiritual discipline. We should feel transported with joy, nay, experience ecstatic delight, a keen enjoyment and exhalaration while pursuing this course of discipline.

In this way one can easily attain God-Realization by following the aforesaid discipline of disinterested Action coupled with Devotion while continuing on the path of worldly activity.

Debtorship More Dangerous than Doneeship and Worse Even than Sin

There is no absolution for the borrower either here or hereafter until he repays his debt to the lender. The borrower has to clear off his debt even after death by being reborn as the lender's mother, father, brother, relation, wife, son or even as his animal—say, for example, a cow, ox or horse—belonging to him.

A debt can never be liquidated unless it is paid off; much less can a debtor attain the highest state. Here in the governmental regime the payment of a debt becomes time-barred after three years according to the State Laws; and if a loan was taken by mortgaging some immovable property such as a piece of land or house, and if the mortgage deed has been duly registered, repayment of such a debt too becomes time-barred after a period of twelve years. But in the kingdom of God a debt never becomes null and void thus even after the lapse of a thousand years. Interest exceeding the principal amount, of course, is not admissible either here or in the other world. Even if a debtor extorts from the creditor a note to the effect that the former owes nothing to the latter, after repaying, to the latter's chagrin, only one half or a quarter of the amount due, the liability even for the amount so withheld continues to be on the debtor. If the principal amount is paid to the creditor in full and he is persuaded through prayer and supplication to forgo the interest, even then the debtor remains obliged to him for that favour like a donee, even though he ceases to be his debtor. If the creditor dedicates his all to God or is able to realize Him, the debtor becomes indebted to God in the same way as the proprietorship with respect to the property of a man dying heirless in this world passes to the State, and if there happens to be a debtor owing some money to the said deceased, the former is absolved from the debt by repaying that amount to the Government. Again, if a creditor dies leaving behind a lawful heir, viz., a son, daughter, brother or kinsman, the debtor is absolved from the debt if he pays back the money to that heir. If, on the other hand, the creditor is alive and the debtor passes away

without paying his debt, the latter can be freed from the debt if his father, son, brother, relation or kinsman pays off his debt. But if the relation paying off the debt was not living conjointly with the debtor at the time of his incurring the debt, the liquidation of the debt by him would be considered as an obligation on the debtor.

A gift, present and aid are distinct from one another. Let us try to distinguish them with the help of the following illustration:—

A certain well-to-do Vaiśya had a married daughter, who was herself blessed with a young daughter of marriageable age. At least two thousand rupees were required for the wedding of that girl. But the daughter and her husband had not the wherewithal to defray the expenses of the wedding. The daughter therefore approached her moneyed father with a request to advance to her a sum of two thousand rupees for her daughter's marriage in the following words—"Papa, please arrange to return to me my five hundred rupees that lie in deposit with you. I expect another five hundred from you by way of a ceremonial gift to your daughter (i.e., myself) for her daughter's wedding according to the accepted usage of your family. I request you to let me have five hundred more as a measure of help towards your grand daughter's wedding, and I ask you to advance another five hundred as a loan to me, which my husband will repay from his earnings in due course. The Vaiśya agreed to the proposal and handed over to her two thousand rupees all told as requested, which enabled her to perform the wedding of her young daughter.

Now let us try to analyse the amount so advanced by the father to his daughter as follows. The father owed to his daughter a sum of five hundred rupees that had been lying in deposit with him. He was accordingly freed from his debt by repaying that amount to her. The further amount of five hundred rupees, which the girl received from her father by way of a ceremonial present, was her rightful due, which she duly received. Therefore, there remained nothing to be claimed on either side on this account. The girl stood obliged but not indebted to her father for the sum of five hundred rupees received by her from him by way of help. As regards the remaining five hundred which the girl received on loan from her father, the girl as well as her husband were under an obligation to

repay it. They could be freed from that debt only by repaying it. If they failed to liquidate it in this life they must do so in one way or other in a future life.

If a person bestows a gift upon, or renders aid or service in any form to, another, the donor, helper or servitor is rewarded according to his desire. If he does so with a craving for any worldly gain, such longing of his is granted. And if he does so in a disinterested spirit by way of duty, his soul gets purified and in return for the aid or service rendered by him he may be rewarded with redemption. If the donee or the man to whom help or service is rendered is entitled to such gift, help or service—as, for instance, a Brāhmaṇa is entitled to receive gifts and even so parents, a master and a teacher are severally entitled to take service from their son, servant and pupil—the persons accepting a gift, help or service according to their title are not considered as beholden to the person making such gift or rendering such help or service. Whoever else than these receives a gift, help or service from another is beholden to the latter. The man under obligation is in duty bound to return the aid or service received by him and to wish well of his benefactor. If he fails in this duty of his, he is guilty of ungratefulness, which too is a kind of sin. Just as a sinner is liable to punishment and he is absolved of his sin only by tasting its bitter fruit, repeating the Divine Name, observing a sacred vow or fast, undergoing austerities in the shape of controlling the senses and rendering service etc., to living beings or by going through penances prescribed by the Śāstras, an ungrateful person too can likewise be rid of his sin by reaping the evil consequences of his sin or by undergoing the courses of discipline mentioned above. A debtor, however, earns absolution only by paying off his debt and not through any penance.

People belonging to the other three castes, viz, the Kṣatriyas, the Vaiśyas and Śūdras, are not entitled to receive gifts. But if anyone among them, under stress of emergency, accepts a gift from somebody by way of help in order to repay his debt, and liquidates his debts thereby, or on his requesting the creditor to write off his debt, the latter absolves him from the debt by way of help to him, the debtor can be freed from the debt. But it be-

comes obligatory on his part to render help or service occasionally to the person who has helped him in clearing off his debt or to the creditor who has written off his debt. If he fails to do so, he is regarded as ungrateful. That is why pious Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras prefer to take a loan rather than a gift or pecuniary help. For, they would feel it obligatory to pay off the amount of a debt; while an act of service, gift or good turn is apt to be forgotten in course of time. The result is that they are unable to return them and turn ungrateful. Although both debtorship and ingratitude are grave faults in their own sphere, yet the fault of ingratitude can be wiped off by doing Japa, through austerities, observing vows and fasts and undergoing penances; while absolution from debt is secured only by repaying the money borrowed from a creditor.

Therefore, a debtor must clear off his debt at any cost. If he has no money to clear off the debt, he must render satisfaction to the creditor by offering to him whatever he has in his possession, viz., land, house, ornaments etc. If they are not enough to cover the full debt, satisfaction must be rendered to the creditor by writing out a hand-note etc., with respect to the rest of the money. Or, if the creditor chooses to employ the debtor and recover the amount from his wages, the debtor should pay off the debt even by serving him. Nay, a debt should be cleared off, if possible, even by mortgaging or selling off one's own person or one's wife and son etc. If the creditor files a suit in the court, the debtor should acknowledge the debt before the court and should press for a decree in favour of the plaintiff. If the creditor is not satisfied even with this and insists on the debtor's civil imprisonment, the latter should gladly undergo the sentence for the former's satisfaction. In no case should the debtor deny the creditor's claim.

Therefore, in the first instance, a man should not, as far as possible, incur any debt at all. If, however, he is compelled by circumstances to take a loan, he should strive hard by fair means to pay off the debt in any of the aforementioned ways.

It is even more obligatory to return the money belonging to an orphanage, Gośālā (home for the cows), school, religious institution, mutt, temple, almshouse etc., sums collected for any other religious purpose or money belonging to a Brāhmaṇa, a

widow, a sister or a daughter and so on. Therefore, if a man is faced with a financial crisis, he should pay off such a debt first of all. It should make no difference even if the money was actually donated by him from his own pocket and entered in his own account-books to the credit of any of such creditors. For, a sum once donated to another becomes his or her property. In such cases some people take shelter under the view that such and such amount was assigned to a charitable purpose by their father on his death-bed or that such and such amount was set apart for a religious purpose by himself and hence there is no objection if they refuse to pay it. But it is wrong to think like that. For, nobody will claim the amount set apart for a religious purpose as one's own and forcibly recover it. Nor will the Lord visibly demand it. Therefore, one should consider it specially obligatory to repay such debts.

Such funds should either be deposited elsewhere and men of good repute should be appointed as trustees with respect to them, or they should be immediately devoted to the purpose for which they were collected, viz., the construction of a Gośālā, school, temple and so on. Or the funds should be placed in the hands of good men formed into a Board of Trustees. For, calamities and misfortunes keep on visiting a man and when a man finds himself in the grip of calamities, a creditor can forcibly recover his dues from him; but who is going to realize the money for which there is no claimant other than God? Hence the liability for such amounts rests with the debtor. Just as the proprietorship with regard to the money of a man dying heirless passes on to the State, so God alone is the proprietor with regard to a fund set apart for religious purposes. Hence God recovers such amounts from the man who has misappropriated them by involving him in that very birth or in a future birth in various calamities such as his being subjected to excessive taxation by government or loss of property through natural calamities and so on. Therefore, regarding money set apart for religious purposes and appropriated to one's own use as more sacred than other debts, one should clear it off before one's death in any of the ways suggested above.

Allotted Duty is Binding Even on Devotees and Jñānīs

Ignorant men who are not conversant with the spirit of the Śāstras and have no faith in them, abandon under the pretence of Devotion or Enlightenment the duties assigned to them by the scriptures. But relinquishment of duties prescribed by the Śāstras has not been connived at in the case of anyone in the Vedas or the Smṛtis, the Purāṇas or the Itihāsas. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*:—

यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत्।
यज्ञो दानं तपश्चैव पावनानि मनीषिणाम्॥

(XVIII. 5)

"Acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity are not worth giving up; they must be performed. For sacrifice, charity and austerity are purifiers (even) of wise men."

Nay, the Lord goes further and makes the following assertion on this point:—

एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च।
कर्तव्यानीति मे पार्थ निश्चितं मतमुत्तमम्॥

(XVIII. 6)

"Hence these acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity, and all other duties too (enjoined by the Śāstras) must be performed without attachment and hope of reward: this is My considered and supreme verdict, O Arjuna!"

Without recourse to action prescribed in the Śāstras and pursued in a disinterested spirit success even in the discipline of Knowledge cannot be easily achieved:—

संन्यासस्तु महाबाहो दुःखमाप्तुमयोगतः।

(*Ibid.* V. 6)

"Without Karmayoga, however, Sāṅkhyayoga (or renunciation of the sense of doership in relation to all activities of the mind, senses and body) is difficult to accomplish."

Even in the discipline of Devotion, action consecrated to God has been declared as conducive to God-Realization:—

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत्।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम्॥
शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः।
संन्यासयोगयुक्तात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि॥

(*Ibid* IX. 27-28)

"Arjuna, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever you bestow as a gift, whatever you do by way of askesis, offer it all to Me. With your mind thus established in the Yoga of renunciation (dedicating all action to Me), you will be freed from the bonds of Karma (in the shape of good and evil consequences); and freed from them, you will come to Me."

Hence performance of duties enjoined by the Śāstras is most essential for those treading the paths of Knowledge and Devotion both. It goes without saying how much more essential it is for a man pursuing the Path of Action; for no success in the discipline of Action can be had without action—न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते (First half of *Gītā* III. 4). "Man does not attain freedom from action (culmination of the discipline of Action) without entering upon action."

That is why men aspiring to attain Yoga (union of God through the Path of Action) resort to action in a disinterested spirit:—

आरुरुक्षोर्मुनेर्योगं कर्म कारणमुच्यते।

(*Ibid.* VI.3)

"To the contemplative soul who desires to climb to the heights of Karmayoga, disinterested action is spoken of as the stepping-stone."

Success in the discipline of Knowledge either cannot be had by abandoning one's duties. The Lord says in the *'Gītā'*—

न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति।

(III. 4)

"Nor does he reach perfection (culmination of the discipline of Knowledge) merely by ceasing to act."

Hence abandonment of one's duties cannot be justified from any point of view whatsoever. There are many people who sit down in a Yogic posture and cheat guileless people by pretending to meditate. One should not fall

into their clutches by allowing themselves to be duped by their mere outward posture. The Lord, as a matter of fact, dubs them as pretenders, who, having withdrawn their external organs, dwell internally on the objects of senses:—

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन्।
इन्द्रियार्थान् विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते॥

(*Gītā* III. 6)

Some others pose as devotees; and, declaring that action is superfluous for a devotee and that all his objects are automatically accomplished through Devotion, they give up the duties assigned to them by the Śāstras, such as saying the Sandhyā prayers and muttering the Gāyatrī-Mantra, performance of sacrifices, practice of charity and austerities etc. They fail to realize that a man gets morally debased by abandoning under the pretence of Devotion the duties assigned to him by the scriptures. In the *"Nārada-Purāṇa"* we read:—

नोपास्ते यो द्विजः संध्यां धूर्त्तबुद्धिरनापदि।
पाखण्डः स हि विज्ञेयः सर्वधर्मबहिष्कृतः॥
यस्तु संध्यादिकर्माणि कूटयुक्तिविशारदः।
परित्यजति तं विद्यान्महापातकिनां वरम्॥

(*Nārada., Pūrva.*, XXVII. 67-68)

"The crafty-minded fellow who, though belonging to the twice-born classes, neglects the Sandhyā prayers otherwise than in extreme distress or danger should be recognized as a heretic fallen from all virtues. One should know him to be the vilest of great sinners, who is a past master in wiles and abandons his duties such as saying the Sandhyā prayers."

यः स्वधर्मं परित्यज्य भक्तिमात्रेण जीवति।
न तस्य तुष्यते विष्णुराचारेणैव तुष्यति॥
सर्वागमानामाचारः प्रथमं परिकल्पते।
आचारप्रभवो धर्मो धर्मस्य प्रभुरच्युतः॥
तस्मात् कार्या हरेर्भक्तिः स्वधर्मस्याविरोधिनी।
सदाचारविहीनानां धर्मा अप्यसुखप्रदाः॥
स्वधर्महीना भक्तिश्चाप्यकृतैव प्रकीर्तिता।

(*Ibid.* XV. 153—156)

"Lord Viṣṇu is never pleased with him who, having abandoned his duty, lives by Devotion only; for He is pleased with right conduct alone. Good conduct occupies the first place in all sacred books. Virtue springs from right conduct and Lord Viṣṇu is the Controller of virtue. Therefore, Bhakti should be practised compatibly with one's allotted duty. Even good works done by those destitute of good morals fail to bring happiness. Bhakti too, if divorced from the discharge of one's duty, has been declared as futile."

हरिभक्तिपरो वापि हरिध्यानपरोऽपि वा ।
भ्रष्टो यः स्वाश्रमाचारात् पतितः सोऽभिधीयते ॥

(*Ibid.* IV. 24)

"He who has lapsed from the conduct appropriate to his Varṇa (grade in society) and Āśrama (stage in life), though devoted to the worship of Śrī Hari and absorbed in meditation on Him, is declared as fallen."

वेदो वा हरिभक्तिर्वा भक्तिर्वापि महेश्वरे ।
आचारात् पतितं मूढं न पुनाति द्विजोत्तम ॥

(*Ibid.* IV.25)

"Even (knowledge of) the Vedas or devotion to Śrī Hari or even devotion to Lord Maheśvara (Śiva) cannot purify the fool fallen from good conduct, O chief among the twice-born !"

Hence a man treading the path of Devotion should not even by mistake transgress the rules of good conduct laid down in the scriptures; for only such devotion to God as is practised while observing the rules of conduct laid down in our sacred books is praiseworthy and conducive to blessedness. In the *Nārada- Purāṇa* we read as follows:—

ज्ञानलभ्यं परं मोक्षमाहुस्तत्त्वार्थचिन्तकाः ।
यज्ज्ञानं भक्तिमूलं च भक्तिः कर्मवतां तथा ॥

(*Ibid.* XXIII. 27)

"Those who contemplate on the meaning of Truth, speak of final beatitude as attainable through wisdom (alone), which has its root in Devotion; while Devotion (in its turn) is earned by those who are devoted to their duty."

Again,

सदाचारपरो विप्रो वर्द्धते ब्रह्मतेजसा।
तस्य विष्णुश्च तुष्टः स्याद् भक्तियुक्तस्य नारद॥

(*Ibid.* III. 78)

"A Brāhmaṇa devoted to good conduct thrives with his Brahmanical glory. Lord Viṣṇu is pleased with him, endowed as he is with Devotion, O Nārada !"

Having brought forth the hierarchy of created beings and allotted to them duties such as the performance of sacrifices, Brahmā (the creator) particularly enjoined action on mankind and dubs those who shirk the duties assigned to them by the Śāstras as thieves:—

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः।
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक्॥
देवान् भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः।
परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ॥
इष्टान् भोगान् हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः।
तैर्दत्तानप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव सः॥

(*Gītā* III. 10—12)

"Having created mankind alongwith the spirit of sacrifice at the beginning of creation, the Creator (Brahmā), said to them, 'You shall prosper by this; may this yield the enjoyment you seek. Foster the gods through this (sacrifice), and let the gods be gracious to you. Each fostering the other disinterestedly, you will attain the highest good. Fostered by sacrifice, the gods will surely bestow on you unasked all the desired enjoyments. He who enjoys the gifts bestowed by them, without giving them in return, is undoubtedly a thief."

Nay, the Lord even brands them as sinful and sensual:—

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः।
अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति॥

(*Ibid.* III. 16)

"Arjuna, he who does not follow the wheel of creation thus set going in this world (i.e., does not perform his duties), sinful and sensual, he lives in vain."

The Lord further denounces in the following words the man who has abandoned the duties assigned to him by the Śāstras and acts in an arbitrary way:—

यः शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारतः ।
न स सिद्धिमवाप्नोति न सुखं न परां गतिम् ॥

(*Ibid.* XVI.23)

"Having cast aside the injunctions of the scriptures, he who acts according to his own sweet will neither attains perfection nor the supreme goal nor even happiness."

Hence people who neglect the duties assigned to them by the Śāstras, declaring themselves as enlightened and exalted souls, commit a blunder through ignorance; for:—

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः ।

(*Ibid.* III. 20)

"It is through action (without attachment) alone that Janaka and other wise men reached perfection."

Here Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that, being His devotee, he should act even with a view to maintenance of the world order, that is, for the good of the world:—

लोकसंग्रहमेवापि सम्पश्यन् कर्तुमर्हसि ।

(*Ibid.* III. 20)

Nay, citing His own example, the Lord stresses the binding nature of duties enjoined by the Śāstras according to the Varṇa (grade in society) and Āśrama (stage in life) of an individual—

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किंचन ।
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥
यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥
उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्यां कर्म चेदहम् ।
संकरस्य च कर्ता स्यामुपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः ॥

(*Ibid.* III. 22—24)

"Arjuna, there is nothing in all the three worlds for Me to do, nor is there anything worth attaining unattained by Me; yet I continue to work. If I do not engage in action scrupulously at any time, great harm will come to the world; for, Arjuna, men follow My way in all matters. If I cease to act, these worlds will perish; nay, I should prove to be the cause of confusion, and of the destruction of these people."

Hence enlightened souls too must act with an eye to the good of the world. The only difference between the actions of an enlightened soul and an ignorant man is that whereas the actions of the ignorant who are actuated by desire are characterized by attachment, the wise should act with an unattached mind. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:—

सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत।
कुर्याद् विद्वांस्तथासक्तश्चिकीर्षुर्लोकसंग्रहम् ॥

(*Ibid.* III.25)

"Arjuna, as the unwise act with attachment, so should the wise man, seeking maintenance of the world order, act without attachment."

This proves that he who, posing as a man of wisdom, declares that he has no obligation to discharge and as such neglects his duties is not enlightened at all in the real sense of the term. In the *Nārada-Purāṇa* we read:—

यः स्वाचारपरिभ्रष्टः साङ्गवेदान्तगोऽपि वा।
स एव पतितो ज्ञेयो यतः कर्मबहिष्कृतः ॥

"He who has fallen from the way of life prescribed for him, though well-versed in the Vedas including the six auxiliary branches of knowledge as well as the Upaniṣads, should be positively regarded as degenerate inasmuch as he has been excluded from the ritual."

Hence those who are devotees of God needs must perform the duties enjoined by the Śāstras. If a devotee too neglects the duties enjoined by the scriptures, who else would care to perform them? Nay, the performance of duties enjoined by the Śāstras in a disinterested spirit on the part of a devotee is conducive to blessedness. Sanaka, the foremost of the sages, says to Nārada:—

स्वाचारमनतिक्रम्य हरिभक्तिधरो हि यः।
स याति विष्णुभवनं यद् वै पश्यन्ति सूरयः ॥

(*Ibid.* IV. 20)

"He who is absorbed in devotion to God, not neglecting his own duties, ascends to that Abode of Lord Viṣnu (called Vaikuṇṭha), which enlightened devotees alone are privileged to behold."

स्वाश्रमाचारयुक्तस्य हरिभक्तिर्यदा भवेत्।
न तस्य त्रिषु लोकेषु सदृशोऽस्त्यजनन्दन ॥

(*Ibid.* IV.31)

"Nārada! if Devotion to Śrī Hari sprouts in the mind of a man devoted to the way of life appropriate to his grade in society and stage in life, there is none like him in all the three worlds."

Therefore:—

वेदोदितानि कर्माणि कुर्यादीश्वरतुष्टये ।
यथाश्रमं त्यक्तकामः प्राप्नोति पदमव्ययम् ॥

"A person desirous of relinquishing the fruits of actions must perform the duties (pertaining to his stage in life and enjoined by the Vedas and other scriptures). Thereby he will attain the imperishable state."

After giving to Yudhiṣṭhira an outline of the code of conduct for the various grades of society and stages in life, the celestial sage Nārada too stresses this very point in the *"Bhāgavata"*:—

एतैरन्यैश्च वेदोक्तैर्वर्तमानः स्वकर्मभिः ।
गृहेऽप्यस्य गतिं यायाद् राजंस्तद्भक्तिभाङ् नरः ॥

(VII.xv. 67)

"Making his living by his own (vocational) duties enjoined by the Vedas and enumerated before and (similar) other duties, a man blessed with Devotion can attain the realm or the state of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (who is present before you), even though staying at home, O king !"

And Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself says to Uddhava:—

वर्णाश्रमवतां धर्म एष आचारलक्षणः ।
स एव मद्भक्तियुक्तो निःश्रेयस्करः परः ॥

(*Ibid.* XI. xviii. 47)

"The foregoing is the moral code governing those who respect the division of society into so many Varṇas and Āśramas. If devotion to Me is added to the observance of this moral code, it speedily leads to the attainment of final beatitude or Mokṣa."

In the *"Viṣṇu-Purāṇa"* the sage Aurva says to King Sagara:—

वर्णाश्रमाचारवता पुरुषेण परः पुमान् ।
विष्णुराराध्यते पन्था नान्यस्तत्तोषकारकः ॥ (III.viii.9)

"Lord Viṣṇu, the Supreme Person, can be propitiated by him alone who follows the code of conduct prescribed for the various Varṇas and Āśramas. There is no other way conducive to His pleasure."

Since the Lord is pleased with men who conduct themselves in accordance with the injunctions of the scriptures, those who neglect the duties enjoined by the Śāstras and seek to realize God fail to do so. Nay, He remains quite out of their reach. They alone, on the other hand, succeed in realizing God, who practise devotion to Him while conducting themselves ideally in accordance with the scriptural ordinance. In the *Nārada-Purāṇa* we read:—

वेदप्रणिहितो धर्मो वेदो नारायणः परः ।
तत्राश्रद्धापरा ये तु तेषां दूरतरो हरिः ॥

(*Nārada., Pūrva.*, IV.17)

"Morality has been expounded in the Veda, which represents the Supreme Person, Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself. Therefore, Śrī Hari remains far remote from those who are irreverent towards the Veda."

वर्णाश्रमाचाररताः सर्वपापविवर्जिताः ।
नारायणपरा यान्ति यद् विष्णोः परमं पदम् ॥

(*Ibid.* XXVII. 106)

"They alone who observe the rules of conduct prescribed for the various Varṇas and Āśramas and are free from all sins and devoted to Lord Nārāyaṇa attain to the supreme Abode of Viṣṇu."

वर्णाश्रमाचाररता भगवद्भक्तिलालसाः ।
कामादिदोषनिर्मुक्तास्ते सन्तो लोकशिक्षकाः ॥

(*Ibid.* IV.84)

"They alone who are devoted to the moral code prescribed for the various Varṇas and Āśramas and thirst for devotion to the Lord and are free from evils like lust etc., are saints capable of guiding humanity."

Taking shelter under the Divine Commandment in the *'Gītā:'* 'सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज', many people actually abandon the performance of sacrifices, charity, austerity, morality etc., enjoined in the Śāstras. But the above-quoted Divine Commandment does not mean that one should take refuge in God neglecting in practice the duties enjoined by the Śāstras. If it meant so, Arjuna too would have given up the duties of a Kṣatriya, viz., warfare etc., and, retiring into a forest, would have

practised devotion to God, withdrawing from active work. But Arjuna did not do so. On the other hand, when, on the conclusion of His teaching in the form of the '*Gītā*', the Lord enquired of Arjuna whether he had listened to His gospel of the '*Gītā*' with one-pointed mind and whether his infatuation born of ignorance had melted away (XVIII.12), Arjuna gave the following memorable reply:—"My infatuation has fled by Your grace, O infallible Lord, and wisdom has been gained. I stand shorn of all doubts now and will do Your bidding (*Gītā* XVIII. 73)." Thereupon the Lord urged Arjuna to fight and that is what he actually did. This proves that duties allotted by the Śāstras to those belonging to the various Varṇas and Āśramas should not be abandoned in actual practice. One should rather dedicate all one's actions to God while performing them all the time. This is what the Lord says in '*Gītā*' XVIII. 57:—

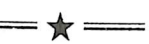
चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः ।

What has been inculcated in the half-verse quoted above, viz., "to become devoted to Me after mentally resigning all one's actions to Me" and the exhortation contained in '*Gītā*' XVIII. 66 viz., "to flee for protection to Me alone after resigning all one's actions (to Me)" just mean the same thing.

Therefore, it is altogether unwarranted to interpret "सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज" as a call to "take refuge in Me, abandoning all one's duties in actual practice".

A man cannot completely renounce action either; for no one can even for a moment remain without doing anything ('*Gītā*' III. 5). Man is compelled to act according to his nature (XVIII.60).

Therefore, instead of actually giving up actions, the fruit of actions, attachment, the sense of possession and egotism should be renounced. This alone gives man supreme peace ('*Gītā*' II.71).



Destiny versus Individual Effort

Many men recognize the predominance of destiny, while others lay stress on individual effort. Let us give serious thought to this question. In fact each is important in its own sphere. Piety, worldly prosperity, gratification of the senses and Liberation are the four Puruṣārthas or objects of human pursuit. Of these the first three are mere Puruṣārthas, while Liberation is the supreme object of human pursuit. Individual effort is the dominant factor in the pursuit of piety and Liberation. He who relegates them to the sphere of Destiny remains deprived of their benefit. In achieving worldly prosperity and gratification of the senses, however, destiny plays the dominant part; individual effort serves only as an exciting cause.

Generally all men put forth strenuous effort for attaining worldly prosperity and even do not hesitate in committing sin for its sake. Even then they are not able to earn as much money as they would because it cannot be had without the requisite Prārabdha or destiny. In the same way those who have no son strive hard for getting a son; but all are not blessed with a son; for destiny is the main factor here as well.

It has been stated above that individual effort is the main factor in the pursuit of Liberation and piety. Now the question is whether past Karma, viz., that which has begun to bear fruit and that which is lying dormant, are helpful in their pursuit or not. Our reply is that they are helpful no doubt, but they do not play the dominant part. As a result of disinterested action and worship of God performed in past lives one secures the company of saints and exalted souls. And if after meeting them one strives on the lines pointed out by them one is sure to attain blessedness, but not by merely hearing their talks. The Lord says in the *Gītā:*—

अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वान्येभ्य उपासते ।
तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥

(XIII.25)

"Not knowing thus, other dull-witted persons, however, do worship even as they have heard from others; and even those who are thus devoted to hearing are able to cross the ocean of mundane existence in the shape of death."

Therefore, if one's past Karma, viz., that which has begun to bear fruit and that which is lying dormant, is favourable, it gets joined with a striver's efforts for emancipation in his current life. In other words, if the striver has already covered half the distance, he has only to cover the other half in his current life. But even of his Prārabdha and Sañcita Karmas the latter counts more than the former inasmuch as the other, viz., Prārabdha Karma ceases to function once it has yielded its fruit. But disinterested action and worship done in the past but not yet converted into Prārabdha persist in a dormant state and, gradually accumulating, lead to Liberation. The Lord says:—

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।

(First half of *Gītā* II.40)

"In this path (of disinterested action) there is no loss of effort, nor is there fear of contrary result."

Generally all men covet wealth and sense-enjoyment; but they cannot be had in spite of one's keen desire to have them. But even a keen desire to lead a pious life and realize God is enough to bring the desired result. Fired with an intense longing to cultivate piety he who makes a special effort in this direction attains piety through that effort alone. Therefore, effort is the chief factor in the attainment of piety, which is only another name for doing one's sacred duties. Similarly in the case of a man seized with an intense longing for God-Realization loving effort inspired by such intense longing speedily enables him to realize the highest object of human pursuit in the shape of God-Realization.

One's meeting with any living being, object, occurrence or death in this world does not follow one's wish. If one wants to die, one cannot do so by merely wishing to die nor can anyone survive

by desiring to survive. In the same way, one does not come by worldly riches and objects, living beings and agreeable occurrences conducive to the gratification of one's senses for the mere seeking, however keenly we long for it; for they do not follow our will. But intense longing entertained for Liberation in the shape of God-Realization is surely realized. Where there is keen longing, effort to realize it is carried on with faith, reverence and love and is also more intense and is therefore crowned with success. Moreover material objects, unconscious as they are, do not reciprocate our desire to secure them; but the Lord does so (*vide Gītā* IV. 11).'

Now let us consider what is destiny and what is individual effort. Past actions which are responsible for our happiness and misery, gain and loss, victory and defeat etc., constitute what goes by the name of fate or destiny. Destiny is worked out in three ways—viz., (1) without our seeking, (2) through another's will and (3) by one's own seeking. Contracting some disease, meeting with an accidental death, a fall in the price of a commodity purchased by us, decay or destruction of an object—all these are the result of sins committed in the past. A windfall etc., on the other hand, are the rewards of virtuous acts. All these fall under the category of reaping the fruit of one's destiny through nobody's will.

Suppose a robber or thief loots or steals our goods or kills us for the sake of money or another takes our life through malice or a beast or bird injures us or a serpent bites us. All these are instances of our reaping the bitter fruit of our past sins through another's will.

If at the present moment we derive joy through the voluntary gratification of our senses, or make a profit out of some business transaction, this is an instance of our enjoying of our own will the fruit of our meritorious deeds done in the past. On the other hand suffering, loss, defeat etc., undergone or sustained by us through our own voluntary effort are instances of our reaping the bitter consequences of our own past sins through our own will.

Prārabdha (fate) covers all the aforesaid cases of reaping the

consequences of our past actions.

All conscious acts being done in one's current life fall under the category of individual effort. It is of three kinds—1-righteous action, 2-unrighteous action and 3-action of a mixed type (both righteous and unrighteous). Righteous action results in happiness, an unrighteous act leads to suffering, while action of a mixed type yields consequences of a mixed type partaking of joy and sorrow both. Says the *Gītā*—

अनिष्टमिष्टं मिश्रं च त्रिविधं कर्मणः फलम्।
भवत्यत्यागिनां प्रेत्य न तु संन्यासिनां क्वचित्॥

(XVIII.12)

"Welcome, unwelcome and of a mixed type—threefold, indeed, is the fruit that follows hereafter from the actions of the unrenouncing. But there is none ever for those who have renounced."

If a man performs an action prompted by desire, he gets in return a wife, son, riches etc., in this world and is rewarded with the attainment of heavenly bliss etc., in the other. But even a little effort made by way of one's duty in a disinterested spirit is rewarded with Liberation in the shape of God-Realization—

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात्।

(Latter half of *Gītā* II. 40)

"Even a slight attempt made to tread this path of disinterested action renders one immune from the great fear of birth and death."

A man mostly enjoys freedom of action, but is altogether helpless in reaping the fruit of his action. The Lord Himself says—

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥

(*Gītā* II. 47)

"Your right is to work only, but never to its fruit. (Therefore) do not be instrumental in making your actions bear fruit, nor let your attachment be to inaction."

Therefore, a man would do well to pursue his allotted duty in a disinterested spirit. He who does his allotted duty without seeking its reward gets his heart purified and thereby attains

Liberation in the shape of God-Realization.

Even in cultivating devotion to God, who is supremely compassionate and most loving, or in dedicating oneself to Him, effort and not destiny is predominant. God is realized through reverent and loving self-surrender to Him. Through reverent and loving dedication one comes to know the truth and secret of God. God is supremely kind-hearted and His compassion extends on all in a limitless measure—want of knowledge of this secret alone keeps one deprived of God-Realization. Despite His supreme compassion he who does not fully realize it due to lack of faith and reverence fails to know the secret of God's compassion and remains deprived of the supreme benefit resulting from His Kindness.

If it is asked whether God is realized through His grace or through one's own effort, the answer is that when a man puts faith in His extreme kind-heartedness towards him, his spiritual endeavour mounts to a high pitch. On his endeavour attaining to a high pitch his heart gets purified with the result that he comes to know the real character of His supreme compassion and love. And God-Realization now takes place. Supreme compassion and supreme love which cannot be accounted for are what goes by the name of disinterested good-will. He alone is a disinterested lover who cherishes such good-will. By knowing Him to be such a lover one attains supreme peace in the shape of God-Realization.

सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्ञात्वा मां शान्तिमृच्छति।

(Second half of *Gītā* V.29)

If, however, a man relegates God-Realization to the domain of fate, he remains deprived of it; for no one has so far realized God as a matter of course by depending on one's luck. If Liberation in the shape of God-Realization could be automatically had, everyone would have been liberated till today. If, however, it is argued that God is realized through His grace, it is no doubt true; but he alone gets the full benefit of His grace who recognizes His kindness to himself. Without recognizing His grace ever flowing towards oneself one remains deprived of its benefit. If, for example, a householder has a philosopher's stone in his possession but values it as no more than an ordinary stone,

he remains deprived of the benefits accruing from a philosopher's stone. If, on the other hand, he brings it into touch with a piece of iron, knowing it to be a philosopher's stone, he comes to have its benefits. Similarly, God's supreme mercy extends on every living being; but failing to recognize it in full people remain deprived of its supreme benefit.

In the same way, true knowledge of Brahma, who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss solidified, does not come by itself through good luck. If such knowledge could be automatically had through one's destiny everyone would have attained it. He who depends upon his fate thinking that knowledge of Brahma would come of its own accord through destiny remains deprived of it; for nobody has attained knowledge of Brahma through destiny till today, nor is it possible to do so. True knowledge of God is attained through the purification of one's heart. The heart is purified through disinterested action and disinterested action is accomplished through effort alone. The Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

नहि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।
तत्स्वयं योगसंसिद्धः कालेनात्मनि विन्दति ॥

(IV. 38)

"On earth there is no purifier as great as Knowledge (of Brahma), he who has attained purity of heart through a prolonged practice of Karmayoga automatically sees the light of Truth in the Self in course of time."

Another way to the attainment of wisdom is the loving practice of Devotion. The Lord delineates it as follows:—

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥
तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥
तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तमः ।
नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता ॥

(*Gītā* X.9-11)

"With their mind fixed on Me, and their lives surrendered to Me, enlightening one another about My greatness and speaking of Me,

My devotees ever remain contented and take delight in Me. On those ever united through meditation with Me and worshipping Me with love, I confer the Yoga of wisdom through which they come to Me. In order to shower My grace on them I, Who dwell in their heart, dispel the darkness born of ignorance by the shining light of wisdom."

It has already been submitted that Devotion to God too is cultivated through effort. He who practises exclusive devotion to God with reverence and love, recognizing His kindness to him and seeking His protection attains to the highest state in the shape of God-Realization through His grace.

A third approach to the attainment of spiritual enlightenment lies through the fellowship of and personal service to exalted and enlightened souls who have realized the Truth. The highest state in the shape of Liberation can be reached through this avenue as well. The Lord says to Arjuna in the *Gītā*:—

तद् विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥
यज्ज्ञात्वा न पुनर्मोहमेवं यास्यसि पाण्डव ।
येन भूतान्यशेषेण द्रक्ष्यस्यात्मन्यथो मयि ॥

(IV. 34-35)

"Understand the true nature of that knowledge by approaching illumined souls. If you prostrate at their feet, render them service and ask questions of them with an open and guileless heart, those wise seers of Truth will instruct you in that knowledge. Arjuna, when you have attained enlightenment you will no more fall a prey to delusion. In the light of that knowledge you will see the entire creation first within your own self, and then in Me (the Oversoul)."

Even the ways and means of attaining Knowledge enumerated in verses 13 to 17 of Discourse XIII of the *Gītā* have been referred to by the Lord under the name of 'Knowledge' itself. By recourse to these means too one gets enlightened and attains blessedness. The practice of all these means of attaining wisdom requires effort and cannot be carried on through luck.

Similarly, the means of securing supreme fixity in Knowledge as described in verses 50—55 of Discourse XVIII of the *Gītā* involve

effort. Thus it is proved that in the attainment of Knowledge too effort alone and not destiny plays the chief role.

The practice of virtue in the shape of good conduct requires effort and cannot be carried on through luck. The great sage Manu has referred to the following four as the final authority on Dharma or virtue:—

वेदः स्मृतिः सदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रियमात्मनः ।
एतच्चतुर्विधं प्राहुः साक्षाद् धर्मस्य लक्षणम् ॥

(*Manu.* II. 12)

"The Vedas, the Smṛtis, the example of the righteous and what is agreeable to one's own self—the wise declare these as the fourfold index to virtue."

And describing the character of virtue common to all Manu says:—

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥

(*Manu.* VI. 92)

"Firmness, forgiveness, control of mind, non-thieving, (external and internal) purity, subjugation of the senses, sound reason, right knowledge, veracity and absence of wrath—these ten are the ten constituents of virtue."

The special rules of conduct to be observed by the different Varṇas (grades of society) and Āśramas (stages in life) have also been discussed at length by Manu in Discourses III to VI of his *Manusmṛti.* All these can be observed through effort. None of these can be followed as a matter of course without effort and through luck.

Thus it is proved that while destiny is the dominant factor in the attainment of worldly riches and procuring sense-enjoyments, individual effort plays the chief role so far as the cultivation of virtue and the attainment of Liberation are concerned.

Glory of Truth

There was a truthful king, whose mind was given to piety. If any common man who brought to his capital cereals, textile goods or any other commodity for sale failed to dispose of it till sunset the king used to buy them. Such was the unfailing vow undertaken by the king for public weal. Immediately after sunset the king's servants accordingly went round the city and if they found anyone sitting with some saleable commodity they made inquiries of him and after paying a price to his satisfaction would purchase the whole stock.

In order to put to a test the love for truth of that truthful monarch, on a certain day, Dharma (the god of piety) himself appeared in his capital in the disguise of a Brāhmaṇa, carrying with him a box containing useless wreckage of his household articles fit for throwing away as rubbish, and sat down in the bazar as a vendor. But who was going to buy rubbish ? When the evening shades fell, the king's men went about the city on their usual round. All the goods that had been brought for sale to the city had been sold. This Brāhmaṇa alone was found sitting with his box. The king's men approached him and inquired whether his commodity had not been sold. On his replying in the negative, the king's men further asked him what article he had brought for sale in that box and what its price was. The Brāhmaṇa replied that the box contained nothing but rubbish and that its price was one thousand rupees. At this the king's men laughed and said, "Who will buy this rubbish, which is not worth even a pice?" The Brāhmaṇa coolly replied, "If no one buys it I shall take it back to my home." The king's men sought audience with His Majesty at once and reported the matter to him. Thereupon the king instructed them not to let the man take his things back and insisted on their purchasing his things after rendering satisfaction to him by paying him a little more or less.

The king's men forthwith returned and offered to the Brāhmaṇa a sum of rupees two hundred by way of price for his commodity. The Brāhmaṇa, however, refused to accept even a pice less than one thousand rupees. The king's servants raised their offer to the limit of five hundred rupees, but the Brāhmaṇa declined it. Enraged at this stubborn behaviour of the Brāhmaṇa some of the king's men returned to the king and complained to him that the Brāhmaṇa's box did not contain anything but rubbish which was not worth even a pice, yet the Brāhmaṇa was not going to part with his things even for full five hundred rupees. They were therefore of the opinion that his articles need not be purchased at all. The king, however, reminded them of his unfailing vow, which he was not prepared to go back upon on any account, and commanded them to purchase the Brāhmaṇa's box for any price which the Brāhmaṇa might choose to demand. The king's servants laughed at this tenacity of their master and returned to the Brāhmaṇa. They had no alternative but to pay one thousand rupees to the Brāhmaṇa in exchange for his rubbish. The Brāhmaṇa took the amount and gladly departed, while the king's men brought the box to the king's presence. The king for his part had the box full of rubbish placed in his own palace.

The same night, when it was bedtime, an extremely beautiful young lady, finely dressed and beautifully adorned, issued out of the main gate of the palace. The king was sitting in the outer chamber. Perceiving the belle, the king accosted her and inquired as to who she was, what had brought her there and why she was going away. The young lady told him that she was no other than Lakṣmī (the goddess of fortune), and that, he being a truthful and pious monarch, she had from the very outset been residing at his house. She, however, found that poverty had since entered his portals in the form of rubbish. She was therefore loth to remain at a place where poverty resided, she added, and hence she was leaving the king's palace that very day. The king, however, did not interfere and allowed her to have her way.

Shortly afterwards the king saw a most handsome youth going out of the palace. He put the same question to the youth. At this

the latter replied that he was the god of charity and had been residing in his palace from the very beginning since he was a truthful and pious monarch. He further told the king that he was leaving for the same place to which Lakṣmī had gone; for when Lakṣmī had forsaken his abode the king had no wherewithal left with him to practise charity. The king said, "All right!"

Later on, another handsome male figure was seen coming out of the palace. On his being questioned likewise by the king, he told the latter that he was morality incarnate and that, he being a truthful and virtuous monarch, he had been living in his palace ever since he had assumed the reins of government. Since, however, Lakṣmī and the god of charity had both left his residence he was also following suit; for in the absence of Lakṣmī and Charity the king would not be able to preserve his morality intact. The king said, "Very well !"

After some time another youthful figure appeared at the entrance of the palace. Interrogated by the king, he replied that he was fame incarnate and had been living in his palace ever since he ascended the throne. He added that since Lakṣmī, Charity and Morality had all left his palace his fame could not endure in their absence. Hence he too was going the same way. The king kept quiet and allowed him to depart.

Still later, another youth came out of the palace. He too repeated the same story when accosted by the monarch. He told the king that he was veracity incarnate and had stayed in his palace since the very beginning of his reign. Since, however, Lakṣmī, Charity, Morality and Fame had all departed from his palace he too was following them. The king told the youth that it was for the latter's sake that he had allowed all those deities mentioned by him to go their way. Since, however, he had never forsaken truthfulness the latter should not in all fairness desert him. The king explained to him that in the interest of public good he had taken a solemn vow to the effect that should anyone bring any commodity for sale to his capital and fail to dispose of it before sunset he would purchase the whole stock that remained undisposed of. The king further said to Truthfulness, "This very

day a Brāhmaṇa brought for sale some rubbish which was not worth even a pice; but it was for vindicating the cause of truthfulness alone that I purchased that symbol of indigence for one thousand rupees." "Lakṣmī," continued the king, "thereupon appeared before me and told me that since poverty had taken up her abode in my residence she was loth to continue with me. For this very reason Lakṣmī and all the rest of her company have left me one after another. On your strength alone, nevertheless, I stand firm in my vow." Truthfulness changed his mind when he came to know that it was for the sake of Truthfulness alone that the monarch had allowed all those deities to depart. He, therefore, decided to stay and got back into the palace.

Shortly afterwards Fame returned to the king and, on being questioned by the latter, told him who he was and added that however morally correct, munificent and wealthy a man might be, he could not attain real celebrity without truthfulness. The stranger further communicated to him his decision to stay where Truthfulness was. The king welcomed his decision.

Morality was the next to make his appearance before the king. On being accosted by the latter, he told him who he was and added that morality stayed only where veracity existed. However charitably-minded and opulent one might be, morality was out of the question where truthfulness was lacking. The newcomer further told him that since truthfulness was present in the king he had made up his mind to return to him. The king welcomed him back into the palace.

Charity also shortly returned. On being interrogated by the king he told the latter who he was and added that charity abided only where truthfulness was present. However rich one might be, he could not be expected to be munificent unless he was devoted to truth. The visitor complimented the king on the latter's respect for truth and further told him that he had accordingly decided to return to him. The king said, "All right !" and ushered him back into the palace.

Lakṣmī too likewise came back after some time and, on being

questioned by the king, told the latter who she was. She explained to him that, since truthfulness had not forsaken him and also because Fame, Morality and Charity too had returned to him, she too had followed in their wake. The king wondered how she would manage to live side by side with poverty, who had taken up her abode in the palace in the guise of rubbish. Lakṣmī, however, replied that under no circumstances she could forgo the company of Truthfulness. The king said, "Very well !" and ushered her back into the palace.

Then came Dharma himself disguised in the form of the self-same Brāhmaṇa. On being questioned in the usual way, he told the king that he was no other than the God of piety and that it was he who had sold the rubbish to the king for one thousand rupees. The stranger further confessed that he had been won over by the king by virtue of truthfulness and had accordingly called on the latter in person to grant him a boon of his choice. He therefore pressed the monarch to tell him of what service he could be to His Majesty. The king, however, merely expressed his gratitude to the deity and said he wanted nothing.

From the foregoing parable it will be clear beyond doubt that where there is truthfulness all blessings are invariably present. Even if wealth, charity, morality and fame are found wanting in a votary of this virtue at any time, he should not get disheartened. If truthfulness is strictly adhered to all these are sure to return of their own accord. Even if they do not, he will have nothing to lose; on the other hand, the highest gain will be his. Hence the seeker of blessedness must not forsake truthfulness on any account. Rather he should firmly adhere to it in a disinterested spirit without fail.

Truthfulness: Speaking the truth, cultivation of noble virtues and right conduct make up what they call Truthfulness. The Lord says in the *Gītā:*—

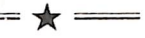
सद्भावे साधुभावे च सदित्येतत् प्रयुज्यते ।
प्रशस्ते कर्मणि तथा सच्छब्दः पार्थ युज्यते ॥
यज्ञे तपसि दाने च स्थितिः सदिति चोच्यते ।
कर्म चैव तदर्थीयं सदित्येवाभिधीयते ॥

(XVII. 26-27)

"The name of God, SAT, is employed in the sense of truth and goodness. And the word SAT is also used in the sense of praise-worthy action, Arjuna. And steadfastness in sacrifice, austerity and charity is likewise spoken of as SAT; and action for the sake of God is invariably termed as SAT."

There is a popular saying in Hindi, which can be translated as follows:—

"Truthfulness must not be given up on any account, O servant of God! Your credit is sure to be lost in the event of your forsaking Truth. Fortune held fast by truthfulness will come to you again (if temporarily lost)." *



* बंदा सत नहिं छाँड़िये, सत छाँड़े पत जाय। सतकी बाँधी लच्छमी फेरि मिलैगी आय॥

Five Types of Karmayoga

Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā is a small treatise; but in no other book has the truth and secret of disinterested Action and disinterested Devotion are found discussed at one place as they lie compressed in it. It contains in a nutshell the essence of all scriptures such as the Vedas, the Smṛti texts, the Itihāsas and the Purāṇas. Once we have understood the meaning and the spirit of it and assimilated it, that is to say, once we have moulded our life according to it nothing remains to be done by us:—

गीता सुगीता कर्तव्या किमन्यैः शास्त्रसंग्रहैः ।
या स्वयं पद्मनाभस्य मुखपद्माद् विनिस्सृता ॥

(*Mahā., Bhīṣma.* XLIII.1)

"The Gītā alone should be carefully listened to, repeated, studied as well as taught, pondered over and assimilated. Having done so, one need not maintain a stock of other scriptures. For this scripture escaped direct from the lotus-like lips of Lord Viṣṇu (who has a lotus sprung from His navel)."

The idea is that while the Vedas, the fountainhead of all other scriptures, issued from the mouths of Brahmā, who took his descent from the lotus sprung from the navel of Lord Viṣṇu, the *Gītā* came out of the lips of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, who is no other than Lord Viṣṇu.

Now wt proceed to discuss below the Path of Action as taught in the *Gītā*. Karmayoga as taught by the *Gītā* briefly consists in:—

(1) Discharging in the right way as a matter of duty the natural obligations that have been imposed on an individual by the Śāstras in view of his or her grade in society, stage in life, temperament and circumstances.

(2) Completely giving up all affinity, attachment and desire with regard to such actions and their fruit and remaining balanced in success and failure as well as in the matter of their reward and offering all one's actions and their fruit to God, recognizing Him

as all-powerful and omnipresent, the support and friend and prompter of all and regarding oneself as entirely subject to His will.

(3) Performing all one's actions as enjoined by Him and under His prompting as an act of worship to Him.

(4) Remaining supremely contented with every dispensation of God and contemplating all the time on His Name, excellences, glory and real character.

The Path of Action as delineated above can be subdivided under the following five heads: (1) Simple Karmayoga (2) Karmayoga with Devotion as its auxiliary (3) Karmayoga combined with Devotion (4) Karmayoga dominated by Devotion and (5) Simple Bhaktiyoga.

1. SIMPLE KARMAYOGA

Simple Karmayoga is that which is not combined with Devotion in the form of God-remembrance, contemplation on Him and so on and in which action is only performed in a disinterested and detached spirit. Simple Karmayoga stands delineated in the following verses of *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā:—*

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

(II.47)

"Your right is to work only, but never to its fruit. Be not instrumental in making your actions bear fruit, nor let your attachment be to inaction."

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥

(II.71)

"He who has given up all desires and moves free from the sense of mine, egotism and thirst for enjoyment attains peace."

ज्ञेयः स नित्यसंन्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न काङ्क्षति ।
निर्द्वन्द्वो हि महाबाहो सुखं बन्धात्प्रमुच्यते ॥

(V.3)

"The Karmayogī who neither hates nor desires should be ever considered a renouncer. For, Arjuna, he who is free from the pairs of opposites is easily freed from bondage."

अनाश्रितः कर्मफलं कार्यं कर्म करोति यः।
स संन्यासी च योगी च न निरग्निर्न चाक्रियः॥

(VI.1)

"He who does his duty without expecting the fruit of actions is a Saṁnyāsī (Sāṅkhyayogī) and a Yogī (Karmayogī) both. He is no Saṁnyāsī (renouncer) who has merely renounced the sacred fire: even so he is no Yogī, who has merely given up all activity."

यदा हि नेन्द्रियार्थेषु न कर्मस्वनुषज्जते।
सर्वसंकल्पसंन्यासी योगारूढस्तदोच्यते॥

(VI.4)

"When a man actually ceases to have any attachment either for the objects of senses or for actions, and has renounced all thoughts of the world, he is then said to have climbed to the heights of Yoga."

In all the above verses Arjuna has been simply exhorted to perform actions in a disinterested spirit, *i.e.*, giving up attachment and desire etc., with regard to all his actions and their fruit. Hence they relate to Karmayoga pure and simple without any reference to Devotion.

The *Gītā* contains numerous other verses too bearing on Simple Karmayoga (*vide* II. 48, 51 and 64; III. 7; V.6, 11-12; XII. 11-12; XVIII. 9—11).

2. KARMAYOGA WITH BHAKTI AS ITS AUXILIARY

Karmayoga with Bhakti as its auxiliary is that in which action predominates, though Devotion is joined to it. This type of Karmayoga has been hinted at in the following verse of the *Gītā*:—

त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन।
निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान्॥

(II.45)

"Arjuna, the Vedas thus deal with the evolutes of the three Guṇas (modes of Prakṛti), viz., worldly enjoyments and the means of attaining such enjoyments; be you indifferent to these enjoyments and their means, rising above pairs of opposites like pleasure and pain etc., established in the Eternal Existence (God), absolutely unconcerned about the supply of wants and the preservation of what has been already attained, and self-controlled."

The above verse, though preceded as well as followed by verses dealing with Karmayoga, contains an exhortation to remain established in God, who is the same as eternal Sattva. Hence this type of Karmayoga has Bhakti for its auxiliary.

Even so we read in *Gītā* III.19:—

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर।
असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः॥

"Therefore, go on efficiently doing your duty without interruption and attachment; for, doing work without attachment man attains the Supreme."

Although Discourse III of the *Gītā* mainly discusses the topic of Simple Karmayoga, verses dealing with Karmayoga having Bhakti as its auxiliary and that dominated by Bhakti are also found scattered here and there. The above-quoted verse 19 of Discourse III, for example, speaks of Karmayoga having Bhakti for its auxiliary; whereas verse 30 of the same Adhyāya deals with Karmayoga dominated by Bhakti. In verse 19 the Lord exhorts Arjuna to perform actions in a detached spirit; hence disinterested action is the dominant factor here inasmuch as absence of attachment implies absence of desire too. And since this course of discipline enables the striver to attain God-Realization, Bhakti too is recognized as playing a subordinate part here.

Further on the Lord says:—

न मां कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा।
इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते॥

(*Gītā* IV.14)

"Since I have no craving for the fruit of actions, actions do not contaminate Me. Even he who thus knows Me in reality is not bound by actions."

He who has no craving for the reward of actions treads the path of disinterested Action; and to know that actions do not bind the Lord because He has no craving for the reward of actions comprises Devotion. In this way the above verse too speaks of Bhakti as an auxiliary of Karmayoga.

3. KARMAYOGA COMBINED WITH DEVOTION

The type of Karmayoga in which Action and Devotion figure in an equal degree can be classified under this head. For example the Lord says in Discourse XVII:—

तस्मादोमित्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः ।
प्रवर्तन्ते विधानोक्ताः सततं ब्रह्मवादिनाम् ॥

(24)

"Therefore, acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity as enjoined by sacred precepts are always commenced by noble souls given to the recitation of Vedic chants with utterance of the divine name OṀ."

तदित्यनभिसंधाय फलं यज्ञतपःक्रियाः ।
दानक्रियाश्च विविधाः क्रियन्ते मोक्षकाङ्क्षिभिः ॥

(25)

"With the idea that all this belongs to God, who is denoted by the appellation TAT, acts of sacrifice and austerity as well as acts of charity of various kinds are performed by the seekers of blessedness expecting no return for them."

In verse 24 above the Lord speaks of engaging in action after uttering the sacred syllable OṀ, while the word 'Tat' occurring in verse 25 refers to God. Hence both the above-quoted verses speak of Karmayoga combined with Devotion.

Further on, the Lord says:—

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

(*Gītā* XVIII.46)

"Man attains perfection by worshipping through his own natural duties Him from whom the tide of creation has streamed forth and by whom all this universe is pervaded."

Although the above verse lays stress on Action, Devotion too figures here in an adequate measure. After pointing out the natural duties of a Brāhmaṇa in verse 42, those of a Kṣatriya in verse 43 and those of a Vaiśya and a Śūdra in verse 44 of the same Discourse, the Lord undertakes in verse 45 to unfold the process whereby a man duly engaged in action attains the highest perfection, and actually delineates the process in the verse quoted above.

Worship offered to God in the form of service rendered to His creatures as so many manifestations of God represents the spirit of Devotion, while service constitutes action. This type of Karmayoga thus lays stress on Action and Devotion both. Hence it has been spoken of above as Karmayoga combined with Devotion.

4. KARMAYOGA DOMINATED BY BHAKTI

The type of Karmayoga which lays stress on Devotion and accords a secondary place to Action has been classified under the head of "Karmayoga dominated by Bhakti". The Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः ।
अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते ॥

(XII.6)

"On the other hand, those who, depending exclusively on Me and surrendering all actions to Me, worship Me (God with attributes), constantly meditating on Me with single-minded devotion."

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्परः ।
बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव ॥

(XVIII.57)

"Mentally resigning all your duties to Me, and taking recourse to Yoga in the form of even-mindedness, be solely devoted to Me and constantly give your mind to Me."

Both these verses refer to actions enjoined by the Śāstras. This constitutes an emphasis on Action; whereas offering them to God, remaining devoted to Him and constantly contemplating on Him with exclusive Devotion—these constitute Devotion. Of these two, again, Devotion is predominant here. Hence the type of Karmayoga referred to here is classed under the head of "Karmayoga dominated by Devotion."

This type of Karmayoga can be further subdivided under the following two heads:—(1) Karmayoga in the form of action offered to God and (2) Karmayoga in the form of action performed for His sake. The first of these two categories comprises actions enjoined by the Śāstras and performed as an

offering to God, that is to say, with the consciousness that everything belongs to God, the doer too is His and the actions done by Him are also His. The Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत्।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम्॥
शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः।
संन्यासयोगयुक्तात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि॥

(IX. 27-28)

"Arjuna, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever you bestow as a gift, whatever you do by way of askesis, offer it all to Me. With your mind thus established in the Yoga of renunciation (offering of all actions to Me), you will be freed from the bonds of Karma in the shape of good and evil consequences and, freed from them, you will attain to Me."

Action done for His sake is that which is performed in accordance with His injunctions for the sake of attaining God-Realization or God-Love or for securing His pleasure. The Lord speaks of such action in the following verse:—

अभ्यासेऽप्यसमर्थोऽसि मत्कर्मपरमो भव।
मदर्थमपि कर्माणि कुर्वन् सिद्धिमवाप्स्यसि॥

(*Gītā* XII.10)

"If you are unequal even to the pursuit of such practice, be intent on working for Me; you shall attain perfection (in the shape of My realization) even by performing actions for My sake."

5. SIMPLE BHAKTIYOGA

Simple Bhaktiyoga is that in which figures Bhakti alone unmixed with Action. The following verses of *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* deal with simple Bhaktiyoga:—

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः॥

(VIII.14)

"Arjuna, whosoever always and constantly thinks of Me with undivided mind, to that Yogī ever absorbed in Me I am easily attainable."

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

(IX.22)

"The devotees, however, who, loving no one else, constantly think of Me, and worship Me in a disinterested spirit, to those ever united in thought with Me, I bring full security and personally attend to their needs."

मच्चित्ता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥
तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥

(X. 9-10)

"With their mind fixed on Me, and their lives surrendered to Me, enlightening one another about My greatness and speaking of Me, My devotees ever remain contented and take delight in Me. On those ever united through meditation with Me and worshipping Me with love, I confer that Yoga of wisdom through which they come to Me."

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥

(XII.8)

"Therefore fix your mind on Me, and establish your intellect in Me alone; after that you will abide solely in Me. There is no doubt about it."

मां च योऽव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते ।
स गुणान्समतीत्यैतान्ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते ॥

(XIV. 26)

"He too who constantly worships Me through the Yoga of exclusive devotion—transcending these three Guṇas, he becomes qualified for attaining Brahma."

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥

(XVIII. 65)

"Give your mind to Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me and bow to Me. Doing so you will come to Me alone, I truly promise you; for you are exceptionally dear to Me."

The above-quoted verses make no mention of sacred pursuits like sacrificial performances and practice of charity, austerities and so on; they speak only of constantly and exclusively contemplating on God in a disinterested spirit, remembering Him with love, singing His praises and glory, giving one's mind and reason to Him, offering worship to Him alone and so on, which are all comprised in Devotion and all of which have God-Realization for their reward. Under pretext of enlightening Arjuna, the Lord delivered His sermon on exclusive Devotion to the entire world.

Besides the verses quoted above, the *Gītā* contains many more verses dealing with pure Devotion—(*vide* VIII.23; IX.34; XI.54; XV.19 and XVIII. 62).

One can realize God by following anyone of the five types of Karmayoga discussed above. Nay, it is possible to realize God even by moulding one's life according to anyone of the verses quoted above in order to illustrate the aforesaid types of Karmayoga. God-Realization is much easier to attain for those who follow the entire teaching of the *Gītā* according to their respective qualifications. Karmayoga apart, the *Gītā* contains numerous verses promising God-Realization to those following the Path of Knowledge. Since, however, they are irrelevant to the topic of Karmayoga, we refrain from quoting them. Here we have discussed in brief the topic of realizing God by following the Path of Action alone.

Therefore those following the Path of Action should choose anyone of the five types of Karmayoga dealt with above, that may suit their aptitude, and practise it diligently with reverence and devotion.

Means of Attaining Success in One's Spiritual Endeavour

Many people have been carrying on spiritual endeavour for the redemption of their soul according to their own lights for a considerable length of time. But the reward of such spiritual endeavours as has been promised in the Śāstras is not seen in them. An effort is being made in the following pages to examine the cause of this failure as well as to suggest how such spiritual endeavour should be carried on so as to ensure steady progress.

First of all a man should determine his goal; for until one's goal is fixed no such endeavour can bear fruit. Therefore, to begin with, one should devote some thought to the question of one's goal. It is evident that all men seek unending and unbroken bliss. They seek such bliss in the world of matter, but no such bliss exists in the world. To take a familiar illustration, a deer runs about in a sandy stretch of land in quest of water but, failing to get water, dies in the course of that mad pursuit; for there is no water in a sandy plain. In the eyes of man happiness appears to exist in the material world even as water appears to exist in a sandy stretch of land. But, really speaking, happiness does not exist in the world of matter. God is the only unbroken, unending and unfathomable ocean of Bliss. Therefore realization of God, who is an embodiment of infinite joy, is the sole end of human existence; for the realization of God, who is an embodiment of supreme Bliss, is possible only in a human body, which has been vouchsafed for this very purpose. All other forms of life are meant only for reaping the fruit of one's past deeds, whereas a human body has not been vouchsafed for enjoying the pleasures of sense. Lord Śrī Rāma says in the *Rāmacaritamānasa:*—

एहि तन कर फल बिषय न भाई। स्वर्गउ स्वल्प अंत दुखदाई॥

(First half of VII. xliii.1)

"Sensuous enjoyment, brethren, is not the be-all and end-all of human existence; even heavenly bliss is shortlived and brings sorrow in the end."

Fall from heaven is even more painful than death in this world. Fools who set their mind on the pleasures of sense even after attaining a human body take poison in exchange for nectar:—

नर तनु पाइ बिषयँ मन देहीं। पलटि सुधा ते सठ बिष लेहीं॥

(*Ibid.* latter half of VII. xliii. 1)

Mundane pleasures alone are poison and God-Realization alone is nectar. Bearing this in mind a man would be well-advised to fix his goal and then to inquire into the means of attaining that goal.

Just as it is open to a man who has set his mind on undertaking a journey to Calcutta to reach Calcutta by motor, rail, aeroplane and so many other means, a variety of Sādhanas such as Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Jñānayoga have been recommended in our scriptures for the attainment of God-Realization, which is the sole end of human existence. Judging by his own predilection, belief and understanding a man should select anyone of these courses of discipline. Faith and predilection are the two principal factors that should be taken into consideration by a striver. Therefore, be it Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga or Jñānayoga, that discipline alone is easy of pursuit, superior, conducive to speedy results and suitable for a man, in which he has pinned his faith and for which he has taken a fancy; and it is for that discipline alone that he is qualified. Therefore it is advisable to determine one's course of discipline only according to one's faith and predilection.

If a striver who has faith in and a liking for Devotion pursues the discipline of Jñāna or Self-Knowledge, if a man who has faith in and a predilection for Karmayoga likewise pursues the discipline of Jñāna and if a man who has faith in and a liking for Jñāna pursues the discipline of Devotion or Disinterested Action, he does not attain a remarkable success in his Sādhana.

Suppose on hearing Jñānayoga praised, a man develops a liking for and faith in the discipline of Knowledge but due to obtuseness

of his intellect is incapable of grasping the subtle truth and secret of Jñānayoga, the discipline is not suitable for him. If he has a liking for Karmayoga but lacks the disinterested spirit, even then the discipline is not suited to him. Suppose the discipline of Bhakti appears easy to him and he has faith in it; but if he has no liking for it even Bhaktiyoga is not suitable for him.

Suppose a man is intellectually prone to pursue the discipline of Jñāna in a secluded corner but he is habituated to a busy life, pursuit of the discipline of Jñāna in seclusion cannot be suitable for him. For, his mind being thronged with predispositions of action, more often than not he finds himself beset with promptings of action only. Hence it is advisable for him to pursue the discipline of Disinterested Action alone. Another man intellectually loves to practise Devotion but due to attachment for actions he is unable to concentrate his mind on Japa (muttering of prayers) and meditation. Under such circumstances he too would be well-advised to pursue the discipline of Action, giving up attachment to them. A third man seeks to pursue the discipline of Action in conformity with his own predilection and intellectual disposition, but due to attachment and desire he does not meet with success. On his part too it is advisable to pursue the discipline of Devotion only.

Now a man hears the praises of Jñāna, while at other times he hears disinterested action being eulogized and on a third occasion he hears encomia being lavished on Bhakti. Nay, in books too he reads complimentary references to a number of courses of discipline. In Bhaktiyoga too he hears and reads the praises now of Śrī Rāma, now of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and at other times of Śrī Viṣṇu and his predilection and faith are moulded accordingly. On hearing of and reading diverse things a man finds himself in a fix and cannot decide for himself what particular course of discipline is suitable and what is unsuitable for him. Therefore, fixing his mind on any one of the courses of discipline heard or read of by him, a man should get devoted to that alone. If a man has fixed his mind on the *Bhagavadgītā,* he would do well to follow those precepts alone, culled from the discourses of saints and other scriptures,

that are conformable to the teachings of the *Gītā* and to ignore those that run counter to them, just as a wife devoted to her husband puts in practice only such commandments as are agreeable to her husband and rejects others. A striver should likewise get solely devoted to anyone aspect of the Godhead, formless or with form. Even among the various embodiments of Divinity such as Lord Śiva, Lord Viṣṇu, Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he should devote himself exclusively to anyone form. For example if anyone worships Lord Viṣṇu, he should recognize Lord Viṣṇu as the origin of all Avatāras and Śrī Rāma and others as His Avatāras. In the same way it is advisable on our part to recognize anyone exalted soul, whomsoever we believe to be such, as the foremost of all exalted souls, obey His commands and follow only such teachings as are conformable to His precepts and ignore those that run counter to them. When a man thus pins his faith on one individual, he will seldom find himself in a fix even if he hears or reads diverse precepts concerning Sādhana.

A striver on the path of spiritual discipline who—though endowed with reverence for and faith in noble virtues and right conduct, based on critical judgment and investigation—feels drawn towards vices and immoral practices due to his conceiving sense-enjoyments to be a source of joy, as also to his attachment for such enjoyments and bad habits, would do well to arrive at a firm conviction, by recourse to critical judgment and investigation, that there is no joy in sense-enjoyments and the world of matter and that all such enjoyments are only another name for sorrow, apart from being transient and momentary. Thereby he can be rid of vices and immoral practices.

Consciousness of joy in the world, the body and sense-objects, attachment for them and the sense of mine with regard to them prevent a man from pursuing a course of discipline decided upon by him according to his faith and predilection. Taking his seat in a secluded corner a striver practises Japa (muttering of prayers) and meditation with good intent; but due to consciousness of joy in the world, the body and sense-objects, as well as to attachment

for them and the sense of mine with regard to them, he falls a victim to sloth and distraction and finds himself unable to concentrate his mind on Japa and meditation. Another striver seeks to enter the field of public service in a disinterested spirit with a view to the good of the public according to the verdict of his critical judgment and thought; but due to consciousness of joy in the world, in the body as well as in sense-objects, as well as to attachment for them and the sense of mine with regard to them he is unable to develop the spirit of disinterestedness. A third striver endeavours in a secluded corner, according to the verdict of his critical judgment and thought, to realize the truth of the formless and attributeless Absolute, who is all truth, all consciousness and all bliss; but due to consciousness of joy in the world, the body and the objects of senses, as well as to attachment for them and the sense of mine with regard to them, sloth, distraction and other such impediments come in his way and success eludes his grasp; for consciousness of joy in the world, the body and the sense-objects, attachment for them and the sense of mine with regard to them are evils that constitute a great stumbling-block in the prosecution of his Sādhana and bring about his fall. So long as these evils are present the fruition of his Sādhana remains a dream nor is he able to attain happiness or peace of mind. Hence these evils must be completely got rid of.

The long and short of it is that in Karmayoga the spirit of disinterestedness is the main factor; it is love of God that is of value in Bhaktiyoga and it is true knowledge of God that counts in Jñānayoga. According to this conclusion one must decide upon a course of discipline conformable to one's faith and liking.

If, however, a man finds himself unable to take a correct decision on the strength of his own judgment, let him approach an exalted soul in whom he can repose his faith and, explaining the whole situation to him, decide upon a course of discipline according to his opinion and then pursue it.

Many people pursue a course of discipline decided upon by themselves according to their own judgment. Others pin their faith on some exalted soul and pursue a course of discipline

recommended by him; yet they fail to achieve full success, the reason being that they do not feel sorry for their failure to achieve success. A striver should feel sorry for his failure to achieve success and should investigate the cause of such failure.

Suppose a striver is habituated to losing his temper and he even sincerely seeks to get rid of this habit, recognizing it to be an evil; but when confronted with an action, occurrence or situation repugnant to his mind, he habitually loses his temper. In this connection the striver should have recourse to reason and argue in his mind on the following lines:—

Man is mostly free to act but absolutely helpless in the matter of reaping the fruit of his actions. Whatever occurrence, situation or object etc., we meet with is the fruit of our past actions. The fruit of one's meritorious or sinful deeds performed in the past is reaped in three ways—either gratuitously or through another's will or through one's own will. Enjoyment of good health, discovery of a treasure trove, the shooting up of prices of one's land, house etc., a casual meeting with some exalted soul etc., for example, are the fruit, reaped gratuitously (by the will of Providence), of a meritorious act done in the past. Falling a victim to some fell disease, destruction of one's wealth and other articles through fire etc., death caused by some railway accident or sudden heart failure or electrocution etc., are the fruit of a past sinful deed gratuitously reaped. One's voluntary adoption as a son by another, transfer in one's name of a property through a gift or through execution of a deed of will and the conduct of another agreeable to one's mind, intellect or creed and so on are the fruit of one's past virtuous deeds reaped through another's will. The deliberate conduct of another repugnant to one's mind, intellect or creed, the usurpation of one's wealth, property, wife and so on, and the assault by another on one's person from greed, anger, fear or any other motive and so on are the fruit of one's own past sinful deeds reaped through another's will.

Getting a son through intercourse with one's wedded wife,

acquisition of wealth through business, the success of any voluntary undertaking and so on are the fruit of one's past virtuous deeds reaped through one's own volition. Untimely birth of a child as a result of intercourse with one's wedded wife, loss of money entailed as a sequel to business transactions and the failure of any other voluntary undertaking and so on are the fruit of one's own past sinful deeds reaped through one's own will.

A little reflection will reveal that however repugnant to our mind a thing may be, which comes about gratuitously or through another's will, it cannot evoke our anger. We feel provoked only by an act done by another contrary to our wishes; for the feeling is there that the man's conduct is unjustifiable and that we are justified in showing our temper to him, in scolding and upbraiding him. To harbour such a feeling is to encourage anger. Hence we are unable to overcome anger. If from the point of view of the discipline of Karmayoga we persuade ourselves that a man doing anything whatsoever against our wishes is not at all to blame, but that we only reap thereby the fruit of some past sinful act through another's will, anger becomes out of the question. Or if from the point of view of Devotion we believe that the provocative behaviour of the man is a dispensation or pastime of the Lord, there will be no occasion for us to get angry with him. And if, from the point of view of Self-Knowledge, we hold that the unseemly conduct of the man provoking our anger is unreal like a picture seen in a cinema show or a dream, there can be no anger. The very desire to secure one's pleasure is the root of anger; for the Lord says:—

कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ।

(*Gītā* II.62)

"From desire proceeds anger."

In the same way various kinds of sinful acts such as adultery and usurpation of others' wealth continue to be perpetrated by

men due to vicious habits. Desire* is the main factor in all these. It is from attachment to the objects of senses that desire proceeds and this attachment to the objects of senses has its origin in the consciousness that joy inheres in mundane objects and the pleasures of sense. The consciousness that joy inheres in sense-enjoyments proceeds from ignorance and the said ignorance is responsible even for evils like paucity of reverence and affinity for spiritual endeavour, lack of understanding, scepticism and so on. The Lord says in the *Bhagavadgītā:—*

अज्ञश्चाश्रद्दधानश्च संशयात्मा विनश्यति।
नायं लोकोऽस्ति न परो न सुखं संशयात्मनः॥

(IV.40)

"He who lacks discrimination, is devoid of faith, and is possessed by doubt, is lost to the spiritual path. For the doubting soul in particular, there is neither this world nor the world beyond, nor even happiness."

Hence one should get rid of these evils by recourse to reason and thought.

It is a blunder of great magnitude to think that it is very difficult to change one's habit of committing sin: for a man cannot lose his temper where the possibility of his coming to a serious harm and getting capital punishment is evident. The same thing is true of attachment. If a man comes to know that a dish, even though it is highly delicious and of superior quality, is infected with poison, he can never partake of it, however lickerish and hungry he may be. Even so if a man firmly believes that a sinful act is bound to be visited with punishment in the form of tortures in hell, birth in sub-human species and untold suffering, he can never perpetrate a sin; while past sins, however numerous they may be, get speedily eradicated through true knowledge of God, through

---

* काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम्॥

(*Gītā* III.37)

"It is desire, it is wrath, begotten of the element of Rajas, insatiable and grossly wicked; know this to be the enemy in this case."

Devotion and through disinterested Action. However great a sinner he may be, he is purged of his sins and gets liberated from birth and death. About spiritual enlightenment the Lord says to Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā:—*

अपि चेदसि पापेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यः पापकृत्तमः ।
सर्वं ज्ञानप्लवेनैव वृजिनं संतरिष्यसि ॥
यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात्कुरुतेऽर्जुन ।
ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा ॥ (IV. 36-37)

"Even if you are the most sinful of all sinners, you will cross-over all sin by the raft of Knowledge. For, as a blazing fire reduces firewood to ashes, Arjuna, even so the fire of Knowledge reduces all past Karmas to ashes."

Similarly the Lord glorifies Devotion in the following words:—

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥
क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

(*Gītā* IX. 30-31)

"Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be accounted a saint; for he has rightly resolved. (He is positive in his belief that there is nothing like devoted worship.) Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, Arjuna, that My devotee never falls."

The idea is that, however great a sinner and offender a man may be, if he makes up his mind not to commit a sin again and takes refuge exclusively in God, the Lord forgives him for his past sins and no longer takes his past sins into account. Says Bharata in *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa:—*

"But the Lord never takes into account the faults of His devotees, being a friend of the humble and most tender of disposition."*

Even in the world it is usually seen that when a man, however great an offender he may be, seeks the protection of the person he

* जन अवगुन प्रभु मान न काऊ । दीनबंधु अति मृदुल सुभाऊ ॥

has offended against, the latter generally fovgives his offence. If a man who has offended against the laws of a government gives an undertaking on the security of a bail not to commit the offence in future and craves pardon, even the government grants him pardon, to say nothing of the Lord, who is supremely compassionate, forgiving by nature and ever intent on relieving the distress of His devotees. If He does not forgive a sinner even when forgiveness is sought from Him there can be no hope for the redemption of a man; for of all living beings in the world there is none who has no past virtue or sin to its credit. No one who is entirely free from virtue and sin can be born. Birth in this world is occasioned only by virtue and sin earned in the past. All these sins are eradicated as a matter of course by true wisdom (*Gītā* IV. 36-37), devotion to God (*Ibid.* IX 30-31) or Disinterested Action (*Ibid.* IV. 23).

A majority of strivers suffer from a great defect, viz., that while engaged in spiritual endeavour they also take delight in the pleasures of sense and fail to give up even evil propensities, immoral conduct and vices. But it should be borne in mind that this is due to lack of single-minded devotion. These evils can no longer persist where there is unquestioning faith in God, exalted souls and sacred books; and so long as they are present fruition of one's spiritual endeavour is out of the question. Hence it is most essential to pursue one's spiritual endeavour, getting rid of concupiscence, anger and other evils.

The Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः ।
कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्त्रयं त्यजेत् ॥
एतैर्विमुक्तः कौन्तेय तमोद्वारैस्त्रिभिर्नरः ।
आचरत्यात्मनः श्रेयस्ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥ (XVI. 21-22)

"Passion, anger and greed, these constitute the triple gate to hell leading to the damnation of the soul. Therefore, one should give up all these three. A man completely rid of these three gates to hell, Arjuna, works his own salvation and thereby reaches the highest goal (i.e., Myself)."

If due to vicious habits evil propensities like concupiscence,

anger and greed, immoral conduct and vices appear in a man when occasion arises and if in spite of repeated deliberation they do not leave him, a striver should feel most unhappy over this and give way to repentance. True repentance lies in the fact that a man does not repeat his mistakes and does not allow any such thing to enter his mind as may stimulate in the least the aforesaid evil propensities such as lust and anger and evil practices. Getting rid even of his minutest faults, a striver should ever scrupulously remain intent on his spiritual endeavour. He should reckon his spiritual endeavour alone as more valuable than his life, wealth, nay, his very life-breath. He should regard his spiritual endeavour alone as of primary importance and everything else as of secondary worth. And he should never defer his spiritual endeavour to the morrow.

In the *Mahābhārata* we read:—

श्वःकार्यमद्य कुर्वीत पूर्वाह्णे चापराह्णिकम्।
न हि प्रतीक्षते मृत्युः कृतं वास्य न वा कृतम्॥

(*Śānti.* CCLXXVII. 13)

"A man should perform this very day what is intended for the morrow and finish in the forenoon what is scheduled for the afternoon; for Death does not wait to see what has been done by him or what has been left undone."

This very idea is echoed in the following Hindi couplet, which is attributed to Kabīra:—

काल करै सो आज कर, आज करै सो अब।
पलमें परलै होयगी, फेर करैगा कब॥

"Do this very day what you propose to do tomorrow and do this very moment what you intend to do today. Death will overtake you in a moment; when will you do it, then?"

Bearing this warning of holy men in mind, a man should strive for the fruition of his spiritual endeavour while he is still alive.

यावत्स्वस्थमिदं कलेवरगृहं यावच्च दूरे जरा
यावच्चेन्द्रियशक्तिरप्रतिहता यावत्क्षयो नायुषः।
आत्मश्रेयसि तावदेव विदुषा कार्यः प्रयत्नो महान्
प्रोद्दीप्ते भवने च कूपखननं प्रत्युद्यमः कीदृशः॥

(*Vairāgya-Śataka* of Bhartṛhari)

"Strenuous endeavour should be made by a knowing man for the redemption of his soul till this habitat in the form of the body is in a sound state, so long as old age is at a distance, the capacity of the organs of perception and action is unimpaired, and the sands of life have not yet run out. Of what avail is one's effort for digging a well when the house is on fire?"

If a man's habits do not get mended in any way and if no effort for mending them proves fruitful, he should take refuge exclusively in the Lord and pray to Him in the following words of Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa for the eradication of his vices:—

"To whom should I speak about my very great adversity (if not to You), O Hero of Raghu's race, wise and beneficent as You are? (You know) my heart, O Lord, is Your abode. A number of thieves have come and made it their home. Most inexorable as they are, they practise coercion and pay no heed to my supplication and entreaty. Their names are Ignorance, Infatuation, Greed, Egotism, Arrogance, Anger and Cupid, the enemy of Wisdom. They create much trouble, O Lord, and handle me roughly, knowing me to be helpless. While I am alone, the robbers are without number; none hears my cry for succour. There is no escape for me even if I run away. (Therefore, pray) take care of me, O Leader of the Raghus! Listen, O Rāma, says Tulasīdāsa, robbers are looting Your house. Infinite is my anxiety lest You should incur a bad name (for not being able to protect Your abode)."*

In this way for getting rid of one's evil propensities, immoral practices and vices and for developing disinterested and exclusive reverence and love for the Lord one should address the following prayer to Him in a piteous tone:—

"Armed with a bow and arrow and accompanied by Your younger brother and Janaka's Daughter (Sītā), O Lord Śrī Rāma,

---

* मैं केहि कहौं बिपति अति भारी। श्रीरघुबीर धीर हितकारी॥
मम हृदय भवन प्रभु तोरा। तहँ बसे आइ बहु चोरा॥
अति कठिन करहिं बरजोरा। मानहिं नहिं बिनय निहोरा॥
तम मोह, लोभ अहँकारा। मद, क्रोध, बोध रिपु मारा॥

pray, dwell for ever like a moon in the firmament of my heart, though free from every desire."*

"You are supreme Bliss personified and the abode of mercy and fulfil the desire of Your devotees' heart. Pray, grant me the boon of unceasing love and devotion (to Your feet), O graceful Rāma."†

"O my Lord, Śrī Rāma, Tree of paradise to the devotee, Friend of the suppliant, Ocean of Compassion and Abode of Bliss, in Your mercy grant me that devotion to Your feet, uninterrupted and unalloyed, which the Vedas and Purāṇas extol, which is sought after by sages and great Yogīs (contemplative mystics) but attained by few and that too by the Lord 's grace."‡

If one prays in a piteous mood on the lines indicated above, one can be rid of all evils and attain God-Realization by His grace.

If in spite of our striving for God-Realization in the form of spiritual discipline we are not able to realize God, we should feel sorely repentant as above and should pine for His sight like Bharata and the cowherdesses of Vraja so intensely that we may feel suffocated in His absence. Of Bharata we read in the *Rāmacaritamānasa:—*

"The term of Śrī Rāma's exile which was the sole hope of his life,

---

अति करहिं उवद्रव नाथा। मरदहिं मोहि जानि अनाथा॥
मैं एक अमित बटपारा। कोउ सुनै न मोर पुकारा॥
भागेहुँ नहिं नाथ! उबारा। रघुनायक करहु सँभारा॥
कह तुलसिदास सुनु रामा। लूटहिं तसकर तव धामा॥
चिंता यह मोहि अपारा। अपजस नहिं होइ तुम्हारा॥

(*Vinaya-Patrikā*. 125)

* अनुज जानकी सहित प्रभु चाप बान धर राम।
मम हिय गगन इंदु इव बसहु सदा निहकाम॥

(*Rāmacaritamānasa* III. 11)

† परमानन्द कृपायतन मन परिपूरन काम।
प्रेम भगति अनपायनी देहु हमहि श्रीराम॥

(*Ibid.* VII. 34)

‡ भगत कल्पतरु प्रनत हित कृपासिंधु सुखधाम।
सोइ निज भगति मोहि प्रभु देहु दया करि राम॥

(*Ibid.* VII. 84 (b))

was going to expire only a day hence: the thought filled Bharata's mind with untold grief. How is it that the Lord did not turn up? Has He cast me out of His mind, knowing me to be crooked ?..... But if I outlive the expiry of the time-limit, no one would be so despicable in this world as I."*

The Gopīs said:—

अटति यद् भवानह्नि काननं
त्रुटिर्युगायते त्वामपश्यताम्।
कुटिलकुन्तलं श्रीमुखं च ते
जड उदीक्षतां पक्ष्मकृद् दृशाम्॥

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavata* X.xxxi.15)

"When You proceed to the woods during the daytime, (even) half a moment becomes an age to us, who fail to see You. And dullwitted is he (Brahmā) who has created a row of hairs on the edge (and thus interrupted the joy) of eyelids of us (all), that eagerly behold (without winking) Your splendid countenance overhung by curly hair (on Your return from the woods at eventide)."

Sage Śukadeva remarked to king Parīkṣit:—

इति गोप्यः प्रगायन्त्यः प्रलपन्त्यश्च चित्रधा।
रुरुदुः सुस्वरं राजन् कृष्णदर्शनलालसाः॥

(*Ibid.* X.xxxii.1)

"Thus singing at the pitch of their voice and raving in various ways, the cowherd women loudly wailed, O king, seized as they were with a longing to behold Śrī Kṛṣṇa."

When one pines in this way in separation from the Lord, one's spiritual endeavour reaches its fruition and God-Realization takes place at once.

---

* रहेउ एक दिन अवधि अधारा। समुझत मन दुख भयउ अपारा॥
कारन कवन नाथ नहिं आयउ। जानि कुटिल किधौं मोहि बिसरायउ॥
× × × × ×
बीतें अवधि रहहिं जौं प्राना। अधम कवन जग मोहि समाना॥

(The initial Caupāīs of *Ibid.*, *Uttara-Kāṇḍa*)

God-Realization through Disinterested Action Alone

God-Realization is attained even through disinterested action alone and much more so if Bhakti (Devotion) is added to it. The Lord says in *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā:—*

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद् ध्यानं विशिष्यते।
ध्यानात् कर्मफलत्यागस्त्यागाच्छान्तिरनन्तरम्॥

(XII.12)

"Knowledge is better than practice (carried on without proper insight), meditation is superior to knowledge, and renunciation of the fruit of actions is superior even to meditation; for peace immediately follows from renunciation."

The idea is that knowledge of God is superior to repeated practice of Yoga, repeated study of sacred books or any other spiritual practice repeatedly pursued. But that knowledge of God alone which is not accompanied by such practice is superior as compared to that practice which does not follow from knowledge of God. Meditation on God is superior to scriptural knowledge (mediate knowledge) devoid of such meditation, and not to direct or immediate knowledge. And renunciation of the fruit of actions is superior to meditation which is not disinterested. In other words, disinterested action or action which is free from longing for its reward is superior to meditation on God practised from some interested motive; for the act of self-abnegation involved in renouncing the reward of actions leads immediately to lasting peace. He attains that very peace which follows from God-Realization. Hence disinterested action is superior to all; that is why renunciation of the fruit of actions has been declared as superior even to meditation. The renunciation of the fruit of

actions referred to in the aforesaid verse is not accompanied by meditation; for meditation on God stands comprised in Devotion to God, which is unquestionably superior to everything else. But disinterested action; even when it is not accompanied by meditation, is superior to meditation which is not characterized by renunciation of the fruit of actions but is carried on from some interested motive. This constitutes the discipline of Disinterested action unmixed with Devotion.

Verse 19 of Discourse III of *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* too speaks of Disinterested Action unmixed with Devotion. God-Realization has been declared in that verse as following from renunciation of attachment. The Lord says to Arjuna:—

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर।
असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः॥

(III.19)

"Therefore, always efficiently do your duty without attachment. Doing work without attachment, man attains the Supreme."

Disinterested action as inculcated in the foregoing verse is not accompanied by Devotion and the striver is enjoined in this verse to do his obligatory duties incessantly. The verse therefore implies that the striver should incessantly do his duty in a detached spirit at all times. The absence of attachment rules out desire as a matter of course; for:—

सङ्गात्संजायते कामः।

(*Gītā* II.62)

"From attachment proceeds desire."

Where attachment, the cause, is absent, desire, which is the effect, is out of the question.

Similarly the opening verse of discourse VI as well speaks of Disinterested Action unmixed with Devotion. Says the Lord—

अनाश्रितः कर्मफलं कार्यं कर्म करोति यः।
स संन्यासी च योगी च न निरग्निर्न चाक्रियः॥

(VI.1)

"He who does his duty without expecting the fruit of actions is a Saṁnyāsī (Sāṅkhyayogī) and a Yogī (Karmayogī) both. He is no

Saṁnyāsī (renouncer) who has merely renounced the sacred fire; even so, he is no Yogī, who has merely given up all activity."

A man who is really actuated by lofty motives, who cherishes the spirit of renunciation in his heart, nay, whose heart is illumined by the light of wisdom, who inwardly practises Yoga and meditation on the Supreme Spirit has not been declared unfit for the title of a Saṁnyāsī (recluse) or Yogī.

Even so at some places the *Gītā* speaks of people renouncing attachment and at others of those eschewing desire. There is no mention of Devotion accompanying such renunciation. Even such Karmayoga (which is not accompanied by Devotion) is conducive to Liberation. There is a reference to this type of Karmayogī even in verses 11 and 12 of discourse V of the *Gītā*. The Lord says:—

कायेन मनसा बुद्ध्या केवलैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।
योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वाऽऽत्मशुद्धये ॥

(V.11)

"The Karmayogīs perform action only with their senses, mind, intellect and body as well, withdrawing the feeling of meum in respect of them and shaking off attachment, simply for the sake of self-purification. Their mind getting purified thereby, they attain God-Realization."

The Lord clearly mentions this in the following verse:—

युक्तः कर्मफलं त्यक्त्वा शान्तिमाप्नोति नैष्ठिकीम् ।
अयुक्तः कामकारेण फले सक्तो निबध्यते ॥

(V.12)

"Offering the fruit of actions to God, the Karmayogī attains peace that follows from God-Realization; whereas he who works with a selfish motive, being attached to the fruit of actions through desire, gets tied down."

In this way the type of Disinterested Action which has been referred to in the *Gītā* as having no connection whatsoever with Devotion is Disinterested Action purely as such (having nothing to do with Devotion). In other words, action which is free from desire and attachment and is performed as a matter of duty is

Disinterested Action purely as such. Even such action makes for redemption of the soul and more so when it is accompanied by Devotion.

Now let us consider what that action is. That work or duty which has been assigned by the Śāstras to a man or woman belonging to a particular grade of society or stage in life, if performed in a disinterested spirit, leads to his or her salvation. The duty of a married woman, for example, is to follow the code of conduct prescribed for a devoted wife. She can realize God merely by following such conduct in a disinterested spirit. Similarly a man whose parents are living can attain the highest goal merely by serving them in a disinterested spirit. Service to his parents is the highest duty of such a man; all other duties are secondary to him. In the *Manusmṛti* we read:—

त्रिष्वेतेष्विति कृत्यं हि पुरुषस्य समाप्यते।
एष धर्मः परः साक्षादुपधर्मोऽन्य उच्यते॥

(II.237)

"The entire duty of a man is fully accomplished when these three (viz., the parents and the preceptor) are propitiated through service. For such service is the paramount duty of a man, directly devolving on him; every other duty is declared to be subordinate."

A reference to our sacred books will show what a large number of women have been redeemed by following the conduct prescribed for a devoted wife. While reproducing the advice tendered by Anasūyā (the consort of sage Atri) to Sītā in the *Araṇya-Kāṇḍa* of *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa,* Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa too says:—

एकइ धर्म एक ब्रत नेमा। कायँ बचन मन पति पद प्रेमा॥

× × ×

बिनु श्रम नारि परम गति लहई। पतिब्रत धर्म छाड़ि छल गहई॥

(III.v.5,9)

"Devotion through body, speech and mind to her lord's feet is the only duty, sacred vow and penance for a woman... The woman

who sincerely takes a vow of fidelity to her husband easily attains the highest state."

Devotion to one's husband has likewise been glorified at numerous places in our sacred books. Anasūyā herself followed the course of conduct prescribed for a devoted wife so faithfully that Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva (the Creator, Protector and Destroyer respectively of the universe) took descent from her in their partial being. There are many other such examples of wifely devotion forthcoming in our sacred books.

Similarly a man can attain the highest state by serving all; of course he must be actuated by a disinterested spirit. He must not have even a trace of selfishness of any kind whatsoever, lurking anywhere in his mind. Our duty in everyway is to serve all. He too who undertakes sacrificial performances and other noble pursuits and practises charity and austerities in a disinterested spirit is sure to attain blessedness.

It is the duty of a Śūdra (a member of the labouring class) to serve all. He attains the highest state by serving the members of all the other three classes (*viz.*, the priestly class, the warrior class and the mercantile class). But he too must be actuated by a disinterested spirit. A Vaiśya (a member of the mercantile class) can similarly be redeemed by carrying on the pursuit of agriculture, rearing cows and trade in a disinterested spirit; but not so the Vaiśya who is a seeker of wealth and undertakes any of these pursuits for the sake of hoarding money. That Vaiśya alone is actuated by a disinterested spirit, who has no interest of his own and is actuated by the motive of gratifying all by undertaking the pursuits of agriculture, trade or rearing the bovine race, and who seeks no return whatsoever even after gratifying all in the aforesaid manner. If while serving others you seek honour, praise or prestige, your service is not disinterested. If you feel flattered to find others bestowing honour on or showing respect to you or singing your praises, although you do not seek honour, praise and respect nor do you aim at receiving these, even then you are actuated by a selfish motive. Such gratification in a way detracts from your disinterested spirit. A man should altogether banish

from his mind the idea that others should compliment him by calling him a man of highly disinterested spirit and utterly selfless. Such compliments should not sound pleasing to his ears; on the other hand he should feel abashed and pained at heart to hear them.

In the course of every undertaking a man should reflect and see for himself whether he has any craving or attachment behind that pursuit. Where there is attachment or craving at the back of some undertaking it should be taken for granted that the pursuit is not actuated by a disinterested spirit. In any case it is supremely good to serve others, even if such service is not disinterested. Even if a man renders good offices to others, and practises charity and beneficence in anyway and does so, say, out of fear or shame or with a craving for honour and praise, his doing so is far better than not doing all this. Of course an action which is disinterested is indeed most exalted.

A man should always remain wide awake. A craving of any kind whatsoever detracts from one's disinterested spirit. There is a world of difference between an action done from an interested motive and a disinterested action. They are poles asunder. Bearing this in mind a man should act in a disinterested spirit.

Before a man undertakes to do a thing the thought strikes his mind as to what he will gain thereby. This is what we call an interested motive. Therefore a man should keep in view the benefit that is likely to accrue to the world at large from an action of his. The good of the greatest number should be his ideal and he should seek no return whatsoever for this benefit; he should rather not accept a return even if it is offered to him. It should, however, be borne in mind that in some cases even the acceptance of a return turns out to be a disinterested act. If, for example, a man bestows a gift in a disinterested spirit as a matter of duty on a hermit, saint, Brāhmaṇa or any other householder as something due to him, to accept such a gift in a disinterested spirit does good to the donor and the donee both. To take another example, suppose a hermit is in need of a piece of cloth to cover his body with and a donor pressingly offers a piece to him

and suppose the hermit has no craving for it for all practical purposes but feels inclined to pull on with his worn out and tattered cloth; yet if, when pressed by the donor, he accepts his offer for the donor's gratification and pleasure, no blame attaches to him. If the donor is likely to feel pained by the thought that the hermit has declined his offer because the donor is good for nothing, to accept his offer just to spare him that pain is as good as declining it. To take a third example, suppose a man sends to a householder friend of his some fruits and other articles saying that they were received as a present in connection with the wedding of his own son, which he would fain share with his friend, and if the man sending those fruits etc., is likely to feel pained at their non-acceptance by his friend, their acceptance would be as good as declining the offer. To take a fourth example, suppose we call on a friend of ours and the latter proceeds to show hospitality to us and if he is likely to be pained by our not accepting it, our acceptance of his hospitality would be as unobjectionable as to decline it.

To accept for one's own gain a service done by another is surely an act prompted by self-interest; whereas it is free from blemish to accept it for the latter's pleasure. In the course of every undertaking we should always be on our guard to see that we have no selfish motive behind it. A selfish motive is the only noxious factor. Suppose we take work from a son, wife or servant and if they feel pained by our declining to take such service from them, to take work or service from them is as unobjectionable as not to accept it. Before accepting any gift or service from another we should consider whether we accept that gift or service for his or her gratification or for our own gratification. We are actuated by an interested motive only where there is some self-interest behind our work. Such an interested motive is a blot on one's disinterested spirit. But there is nothing wrong in our accepting that which is really our legitimate due. The best thing is that we accept something not for our own pleasure but for the gratification of others. This constitutes our disinterested spirit.

Moreover, it should be particularly borne in mind that we conceive a liking for whatever comes to us reacting agreeably on our mind, while we loathe that which reacts unfavourably on our mind. But where there are attraction and aversion at play, no disinterested spirit is there. Therefore likes and dislikes should be altogether eschewed while undertaking any and every pursuit. It does good to one's soul even to move among the pleasures of sense provided one is free from likes and dislikes. To enjoy the pleasures of sense in a legitimate way without conceiving a liking or zest for them is what is meant by moving among them. Taking food and drink, for example, is a legitimate act inasmuch as it is necessary and desirable for keeping the body and soul together. The expression "moving among the objects of sense" smacks of attachment; hence we feel compelled to add a note of warning that the phrase "moving among the objects of senses" should not be taken in the sense of enjoying the pleasures of sense with a feeling of attachment or zest. An act of moving among the pleasures of sense such as taking food and drink in a legitimate way for the sake of bare maintenance of body without any craving whatsoever is an example of what they call a disinterested spirit. We read in the *Gītā:*—

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् ।
आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥
प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।
प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥

(II. 64-65)

"But the self-controlled striver, while enjoying the various sense-objects through his senses, which are disciplined and free from likes and dislikes, attains placidity of mind. With the attainment of such placidity of mind, all his sorrows come to an end; and the intellect of such a person of tranquil mind, soon withdrawing itself from all sides, becomes firmly established in God."

Such is the glory of a disinterested spirit. There is no attachment, no desire, no likes and dislikes in the act of moving

among the objects of senses referred to in the above-quoted verses. The striver mentioned here performs legitimate acts only as a matter of duty. He moves among the objects of senses by his senses alone without attachment or aversion. Such conduct on his part ensures his salvation. The Lord says:—

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।
निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥

(*Gītā* II.71)

"He who gives up all desires, and moves free from attachment, egotism and thirst for enjoyment attains peace."

In the verse preceding this as well we read:—

स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ।

"He in whom all enjoyments merge themselves attains peace; not he who hankers after such enjoyments."

Hence the verse quoted above also refers to the attainment of the same real peace.

In this way the salvation of a man is ensured even through mere disinterested action, much more so when Devotion is added to it.

Success of Human Life

Human birth is most difficult to attain. This is had through Divine Grace of God-Realization alone. Those who fritter away the precious moments of their life in the enjoyment of luxuries and in the endeavour to secure them, commit a very great blunder; for, really speaking, there is no joy in the accumulation and enjoyment of luxuries, joy only appears to proceed from the through ignorance. The Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

अनित्यमसुखं लोकमिमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम्॥

(IX. 33—Second half)

"Therefore, having obtained this joyless and transient (human) life, constantly worship you Me."

A striver would therefore be well-advised to devote his or her mind constantly to the remembrance of and contemplation on the Lord in a disinterested spirit with reverence and devotion. There is no certitude about death. This life can get extinct all of a sudden any moment. Then no repentance will prove of any avail. Therefore neither should we get attached to the objects of enjoyment, taking them to be the embodiments of joy, nor should we be dilatory in our endeavour for God-Realization, taking the body to be lasting. We should immediately take to constant remembrance and worship of God in a disinterested spirit with reverence and devotion. Or else much harm may come to us. Śruti says:—

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति
न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः।
भूतेषु भूतेषु विचित्य धीराः
प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकादमृता भवन्ति॥

(Kena. Up. II.5)

"If a man comes to realize God in this (very) life, well and good; great harm will (on the other hand) come to him if he fails to realize Him in this life. Perceiving the presence of God in all living beings, the wise accordingly attain immortality in the form of God-Realization on departing from this world."

Pointing out in the course of his sermon to his beloved subjects the glory of human birth, which is so difficult to attain, Lord Śrī Rāma too says in *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa:*—

"It is by great good fortune that you have secured a human body, which—as declared by all the scriptures—is difficult even for the gods to attain. It is a tabernacle for spiritual endeavours, a gate way to Liberation. He who fails to earn a good destiny hereafter even on attaining it reaps torture in the other world and beats his head in remorse, wrongly attributing the blame to Time, Fate and God. Sensuous enjoyment, brethren, is not the be-all and end-all of human existence; even heavenly enjoyment is short-lived and ends in sorrow. The fools who devote their mind to the pleasures of sense even after attaining human birth take poison in exchange for nectar." *

Realizing the glory of human birth, a striver should therefore make the most of his life. Time bygone can never return. It is altogether incorrect to lay the blame at the door of Time, Destiny and God; for there is no time so propitious as the Kali age. Says Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa:—

"No other age can compare with the Kali age provided a man has faith (in its virtue); for in this age one can easily cross the ocean

---

* बड़े भाग मानुष तनु पावा। सुर दुर्लभ सब ग्रंथन्हि गावा॥
साधन धाम मोच्छ कर द्वारा। पाइ न जेहिं परलोक सँवारा॥
सो परत्र दुख पावइ सिर धुनि धुनि पछिताइ।
कालहि कर्महि ईस्वरहि मिथ्या दोस लगाइ॥
एहि तन कर फल बिषय न भाई। स्वर्गउ स्वल्प अंत दुखदाई॥
नर तनु पाइ बिषयँ मन देहीं। पलटि सुधा ते सठ बिष लेहीं॥

(*Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa* VII. xlii. 4, xliii, xliii.1)

of transmigration simply by singing Śrī Rāma's holy praises." *

With regard to Destiny too Tulasīdāsa likewise says that human birth, which is difficult to attain even for gods, is had by great luck. The same is the verdict of all true scriptures. And it is the height of folly to lay the blame at the door of God; for:—

"Rarely does God, who loves the Jīva without any selfish motive, graciously bestow on it a human form." †

Therefore, man alone is to blame for his not being able to cross the ocean of metempsychosis and it behoves him alone to rectify this error.

For the redemption of one's soul the land of Bharata is the most favourable, the age of Kali is the most propitious time, the human body is the fittest vehicle and the fellowship of saints and true scriptures is the best company to keep. He who fails to redeem his soul even after securing all these advantages will have to repent bitterly. Says Gosvāmī Tulasīdāsa:—

"The man who, though equipped with all these resources, fails to cross the ocean of metempsychosis is ungrateful and dull-witted and meets with the fate of a self murderer." ‡

A striver should take stock of his spiritual position and should not feel despondent and dispirited recalling his past conduct. The meanest fellow can be speedily reformed and redeemed if he earnestly takes to the worship and remembrance of God, reposing his faith in and depending on Him. The Lord Himself says:—

अपि चेत्सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥

---

* कलिजुग सम जुग आन नहिं जौं नर कर बिस्वास ।
गाइ राम गुन गन बिमल भव तर बिनहिं प्रयास ॥
(*Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa* VII. ciii. A)

† कबहुँक करि करुना नर देही । देत ईस बिनु हेतु सनेही ॥
(*Ibid.* VII. xliii. 3–latter half)

‡ जो न तरै भव सागर नर समाज अस पाइ ।
सो कृत निंदक मंदमति आत्माहन गति जाइ ॥
(*Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa* VII. xliv)

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।
कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

(*Gītā* IX.30-31)

"Even if the vilest sinner worships Me with exclusive devotion, he should be accounted a saint; for he has rightly resolved (He is positive in his belief that there is nothing like devoted worship.) Speedily he becomes virtuous and secures lasting peace. Know it for certain, Arjuna, that My devotee never falls."

A striver should therefore diligently take at the earliest moment to the worship and remembrance of God with reverence, faith and love. He should not allow even a moment of his life to be wasted. He should do every work according to His behest and for His pleasure alone. A striver should not feel despondent looking to his lower grade in society and stage in life and humble birth; for. whatever his grade in society, stage in life and whoever he may be by birth, he can be speedily redeemed by taking refuge in the Lord. The Lord Himself says in the *Gītā*:—

मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः ।
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ॥

(IX. 32)

"Arjuna, womenfolk, Vaiśyas (members of the trading and agriculturist classes), Śūdras (those belonging to the labouring and artisan classes), as well as those of vile birth (such as the pariah), whoever they may be, taking refuge in Me, they too attain the supreme goal."

No difficulty or disability comes in the way of one's practice of Devotion to God. Everybody can practise Devotion under all circumstances. The path of Devotion to God is most easy to tread. The Lord Himself says:—

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥
यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥
शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः ।
संन्यासयोगयुक्तात्मा विमुक्तो मामुपैष्यसि ॥

(*Gītā* IX. 26—28)

"Whosoever offers to Me with love a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, I appear in person before that disinterested devotee of purified intellect, and (delightfully) partake of that article offered by him with love. Arjuna, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever you bestow as a gift, whatever you do by way of askesis, offer it all to Me. With your mind thus established in the Yoga of Renunciation (offering of all actions to Me), you will be freed from the bonds of Karma in the shape of good and evil consequences; and freed from them, you shall attain Me."

Realizing thus the glory of Devotion to God and the fact of its being easy of practice and also one's eternal relationship with God, one should completely surrender oneself to the Lord and constantly think of Him. The Lord can be easily attained by constantly thinking of Him. The Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः॥

(VIII. 14)

"Arjuna, whosoever always and constantly thinks of Me with undivided mind, to that Yogī always absorbed in Me I am easily attainable."

It should be noted that there is no other discipline so good as Devotion for the redemption of one's soul. The *Gītā* says:—

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना।
श्रद्धावान्भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः॥

(VI.47)

"Of all Yogīs, again, he who devoutly worships Me with his mind focussed on Me is considered by Me to be the best Yogī."

A little reflection will bring home to us that whatever we have in the shape of favourable or unfavourable circumstances, young or old age and material objects etc., are all transitory. No one depending on these, recognizing them as one's own, can diligently take to a course of spiritual discipline. All these continue to be acquired and lost according to the dispensation of the Lord. We should make the most of them for the pleasure of the Lord. To relate oneself to them and to seek to derive joy through them is the

road to degradation; for no joy inheres in them. Joy appeârs in them through delusion. Hence one should not cherish a feeling of mineness with regard to them nor conceive attachment for them. No one cherishing a feeling of mineness with regard to them or conceiving attachment for them can attain peace. Hence a striver should completely give up the feeling of mineness, attachment or aversion, apprehension or longing for them. Giving up all these, we should earnestly take to the worship and remembrance of God with reverence and love. We should devote all such objects as have been vouchsafed to us by grace of God to the service of God alone. To serve all is to serve God Himself. To render service to all, recognizing all as so many manifestations of God or viewing God as pervading all is to serve God alone. In *Gītā* VII. 19 the Lord proclaims that all are His manifestations alone:—

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

(VII.19)

"In the very last of all births, the enlightened soul worships Me, realizing that all this is God. Such a great soul is very rare."

The truth that God pervades all has been proclaimed in the *Gītā* and other sacred books at various places (*vide Gītā* VIII. 22). In *Gītā* XVIII. 46 too we read:—

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

"Man attains the highest perfection by worshipping through the performance of his own duties Him from whom the tide of creation has streamed forth, and by whom all this universe is pervaded."

Therefore, to serve, adore and offer homage and respect to all according to one's allotted duty, viewing God as pervading all, is worship of God alone. Hence to serve all viewing God as present in all is a most excellent spiritual discipline. Therefore, whatever we do should be done without any selfish motive, with the object of doing good to all in a disinterested spirit. Here lies the success of human life.

Blessedness through Reformation in Dowry System and Business

In the present times evil customs of various kinds and extravagance are gaining ground everyday, which is very harmful to society. The system of spending lavishly on the occasion of betrothing a boy and a girl, wedding, Dvirāgamana (the second visit of a bride to her husband's house after a visit to her father's), Bhāta or Māyarā (the ceremony of giving presents to a married daughter or sister on the occasion of her son's or daughter's wedding), Chūchaka (giving presents on a large scale to one's daughter on her giving birth to her first male child), Khicarī (giving presents on a smaller scale to one's daughter on her giving birth to her first male child) and so on in the Māravārī society is highly pernicious. The expensive ceremony of Sagāī (engaging a boy and a girl), wedding and Dvirāgamana (Gaunā) are in vogue almost in all the States of the Indian Union. They are becoming more and more expensive, which is most destructive for the country. Much has been written in the form of articles in the past for carrying out reforms in these customs and comments are made on this subject on many an occasion in the course of discourses; nay, a number of friends met together and, forming themselves into committees, framed rules for carrying out certain reforms. No reform has, however, so far been carried out. But if no reform is speedily made now the result is calculated to be most disastrous for the country and society.

For the fact that the system of demanding exorbitant dowries on the occasion of weddings is in vogue, those taking dowries are mostly to blame more than anyone else. Reform can be introduced only when these latter practise self-denial. On the engagement and wedding of a girl the guardians of the poorest boy expect a sum of at least five thousand rupees from the guardian of the girl; but if the latter happens to be very poor, how can marriage take place ? The guardians of these girls are helpless because of their poverty.

Under such circumstances the guardians of the boys alone are requested to practise self-denial.

The parents of some girls commit suicide due to their inability to marry their daughters for want of money. Nay, perceiving the agony of their parents, some girls too commit suicide. This is a highly deplorable state of affairs. People extorting such exorbitant sums of money are to blame for these acts of suicide.

Some moneyed guardians of girls spend lavishly on the occasion of their wedding without such demand from the guardian of the bridegroom, which has a baneful effect on society and the country.

Similarly on the occasion of Dvirāgamana (Gaunā) the guardians of boys-even of ordinary status expect presents worth at least two thousand rupees. If the father of the girl is in service, where will he get so much money from? He will neither get the amount on loan nor as a help.

Similarly on the occasion of their son's or daughter's marriage married daughters demand a sum of two thousand rupees from their father by way of Bhāta (Māyarā). Even if the father of the girl happens to be poor, he has to spend at least one thousand rupees on such occasions. Likewise on the occasions of Chūchaka, Khicarī and so on, this evil custom of spending lavishly is in vogue. Due to this the guardians of girls are finding themselves in a very sad plight. The readers are therefore requested to take note of and ponder over this state of affairs and should in a selfless spirit accept the barest minimum while taking dowries and set a noble example before all so that this custom may cease.

On many other occasions too besides that of dowry, extravagance has come to be the order of the day in our country. People spend lavishly even on the occasion of Śrāddha (a feast given to Brāhmaṇas and others on the twelfth, thirteenth or sixteenth day after the death) of a deceased relative. Even a man without means spends a lot on this occasion by borrowing money or taking help from others. Abstaining from this practice, one should (only) perform the rites connected with the Śrāddha ceremony as prescribed by the Śāstras (scriptures) according to one's means.

Even on the birth of a male heir people have begun to give feasts to their friends and relatives, which is also a form of extravagance. Nay, people are spending lavishly nowadays even in celebrating

the birthday of their boys and girls, which is not countenanced by the Śāstras and is entirely useless. This practice should therefore be stopped altogether.

Similarly at some places on the occasion of wedding etc., many evil customs such as the use of intoxicating drugs and drinks, indulging in indoor games such as card-playing, playing at chess and raillery, singing abusive songs, indecent talks of women with the bridegroom in privacy, music and dance by dancing girls and other professionals and so on are in vogue and more such evil customs are gaining ground everyday.

Many such evil customs and extravagance have mounted up, while on the other hand due to the present crisis brought about by soaring prices poor people find it difficult even to meet their requirements of food and clothing. Under such circumstances when some occasion of special expenditure comes up before them, they have to face a great difficulty. This tide of error should be put a stop to somehow, otherwise its consequences will be disastrous.

In the same way the judgment of those businessmen who practise mendacity, deceit, theft, dishonesty, black-market, cheating, perfidy and underhand dealings and maintain false account-books and ledgers in order to escape the incidence of income-tax and sales-tax etc., gets vitiated by such unfair earnings. Many railway and other government servants too take bribes. Their judgment too gets vitiated by such bribe-taking. Factory and mill hands expect more leave and higher wages but do not work diligently in a trust-worthy way; while the employers too seek to take more work from their employees in return for lesser wages, both of which are unjustifiable.

Men should transact business fairly and truthfully. A dealer should neither give less to a purchaser nor take more from a seller in measure, weight and number. He should supply and take goods according to the sample shown and agreed upon. He should not deceive purchasers by keeping a better quality of goods above and an inferior quality below in his piles kept for sale. Mixing vegetable oils and other inferior substances in ghee, water, arrow-root etc., in milk, the paste of potatoes or rice in Khovā (dehydrated milk),

cheaper oils such as ground-nut oil in sesame, mustard and other more valuable oils, clay and gravel in cereals such as pulses and other seeds in poppy-seeds, selling counterfeit musk, saffron, sago etc., and dealing in adulterated goods—all these are acts of deceiving other dealers and purchasers. All these should be completely abandoned. To transport wheat, rice etc., to other places where the entry of these goods is prohibited and letting them pass for other cereals such as pulses, Arahara, peas etc., whose entry is not so prohibited, by bribing the railway employees and getting the articles noted as such in the railway receipt is to cheat the railway authorities and the government. Similarly to cheat the railways, the government, fellow-businessmen and purchasers in this and such other ways out of greed is highly degrading for the country as well as society. Hence one should altogether eschew this evil.

Even so, of the dealers in Ayurvedic medicines some manufacture counterfeit medicines, while some mix other inferior ingredients in them, while still others mix even allopathic medicines in them and sell those medicines under the label of Ayurvedic medicines. This is most improper. Similarly some dealers in allopathic medicines too sell counterfeit medicines or even adulterate them. Some get arrested and are prosecuted too; yet people do not give up the practice of adulteration. Adulteration of medicines is injurious to public health and highly unjustifiable. Hence all dealers in medicines are requested not to practise adulteration of any kind but sell genuine medicines and deal truthfully with all.

If anyone is asked to deal with fair equality and truthfulness the reply we get from the individual is that in these hard times none can afford to have truthful and fair dealings. Hearing their reply, others too are carried away with the tide of unfair dealings. But this betrays ignorance, love for mammon and lack of spiritual strength on the part of those who make such replies. They have no faith in God the scriptures and fate. Hence their words should not be followed. A man should not allow weakness even to approach him; for due to contact with such a vicious atmosphere the judgment of almost all men is getting vitiated and evil traits are developing in them. Their conduct too is getting corrupted according to the evil

propensities of their mind. It is a rule that vices are fostered by evil conduct and *vice versa*. They are vitally dependent on each other like the tree and the seed. Due to all these factors people have strayed and are straying farther and farther from the path of spirituality. Striving for God-Realization does not appeal to them at all. Falling a prey to lust for honour, fame and prestige even while striving for it, some begin to practise dissimulation; nay, judging others critically these people revile them and hear them being reviled, while some people rejoice to see others suffering, practise dissimulation and take to sham dealings only in order to establish their sway and influence. Due to all these evils their mind becomes impure and leads to their fall.

In reality, however, the soul of a man is redeemed only after his mind gets purified through money earned by lawful means and truthful dealings. On this subject we read the story of a Vaiśya (trader) named Tulādhāra in the *Sṛṣṭi-Khaṇḍa* of the *Padma-Purāṇa*. His dealings were free from lying, deceit, theft and dishonesty. He dealt equitably, truthfully and uniformly with all, remained intent on the welfare of all and never told a lie even when faced with death. People, therefore, transacted business with him on his word alone. By virtue of these qualities he came to know all things relating to the past and the future. By dint of this truthful behaviour not only he but through his power his own people as well as those creatures living about him ascended to the supreme Divine Abode.

On the subject of truthful dealings we likewise read the story of a high-souled Vaiśya named Nandabhadra, a devotee of Lord Śiva, in Discourses XI to XII of *Kumārikā-Khaṇḍa,* forming part of the *Māheśvara-Khaṇḍa,* of *Skanda-Purāṇa*. His dealings were equitable and truthful. In the interest of all he transacted business with a narrow margin of profit. He never dealt in spirituous liquor etc. He made no distinction between his customers. His dealings were ever free from mendacity and deceit and were uniform towards all. By dint of his truthful and uniform dealing and devotion to Lord Śiva he eventually attained blessedness.

The long and short of it is that food procured with money earned through truthful business gets purified. One's judgment gets

refined by partaking of such food, while it gets polluted by partaking of food procured with ill-gotten money and leads to one's downfall.

Therefore men should shun the afore-mentioned vices, evil company, vicious surroundings and undesirable behaviour. They should have recourse to truthful and uniform dealings characterized by self-denial and equity, so that their mind may get purified and they may be redeemed quickly. Full of abundant zeal, reverence and faith, one should make special efforts for the redemption of one's soul. There is very great strength in reverence and faith. They never allow weakness to enter one's mind and intensify one's zeal.

It should be borne in mind that whatever comes to be without one's will or through another's will has the hand of God behind it. Therefore, taking it to be the benign dispensation of God, one should submit most cheerfully to whatever comes about and should depend on the goodwill of the Lord in carrying out whatever one undertakes. Through the grace of God, really speaking, even that which is impossible becomes possible. For a man nothing is impossible either, much less God-Realization, effort for which is always backed by God. For this reason too one should have great zeal in one's mind. There is no undertaking which cannot be accomplished through human endeavour. Napoleon Bonaparte was an ordinary man, but by dint of self-confidence and zeal he conquered many countries. He claimed that nothing is impossible for man. He had the word 'impossible' expunged from his dictionary. From his assertion we should draw the moral that we should never give way to despondency, despair and lack of enthusiasm in our endeavour for God-Realization and never look upon God-Realization as impossible or difficult; for man is not dependent on others in the matter of God-Realization. He is fully independent in the matter of God-Realization. Time, place and circumstances too do not come in his way. If a man regards worldly circumstances as coming in the way of his spiritual endeavour, this shows his ignorance and lack of soul-force and nothing else. Really speaking, his own self stands in his way. A man should therefore diligently strive for the

redemption of his soul. The Lord says in the *Gītā*:—

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।
आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥
बन्धुरात्मात्मनस्तस्य येनात्मैवात्मना जितः ।
अनात्मनस्तु शत्रुत्वे वर्तेतात्मैव शत्रुवत् ॥

(VI. 5-6)

"One should lift oneself up by one's own efforts and should not degrade oneself; for one's own self is one's friend and one's own self is one's enemy. One's own self is the friend of that soul by whom the lower self (viz., the mind, the senses and the body) has been conquered; on the other hand, the very self of him who has not conquered his (lower) self behaves inimically like one's own enemy."

The idea is that one should not waste this rare human birth secured through the grace of God. One should fulfil one's life by pursuing the path of Disinterested Action, spiritual enlightenment, Devotion or any other such path. This is what is meant by redeeming oneself with one's own effort. To perpetrate, on the other hand, sinful deeds of various kinds, falling a prey to evil propensities such as likes and dislikes, lust and anger, greed and infatuation, and as a consequence to prepare the way once again for the wombs of a swine or dog, remaining deprived of God-Realization, the *summum bonum* of human existence, is what is meant by bringing about one's own downfall. He who strives for his own deliverance is his own friend; while he who does otherwise is his own enemy; for he whose body, senses and mind get controlled is able to deliver himself from the ocean of worldly existence without exertion and achieves his object by realizing God, who is the same as supreme Bliss. That is why he is his own friend. He, on the other hand, whose body, senses and mind are not under control but remain unbridled and self-indulgent, as a result of which man directs them towards enjoyment rather than applying them to endeavour for attaining blessedness according to the goal set before him and, going through various forms of life compels himself to go through terrible tortures acts contrary to his real welfare, mistaking woe for joy and harm for good; hence he is

his own enemy.

Realizing this, a man should carefully strive for his own welfare. He is independent in the matter of redemption of his soul, hence it is not a difficult task. Nevertheless, if anyone finds the endeavour for redemption of his soul difficult and feels the necessity of leaning on anyone else, let him lean on God. To a man striving for the redemption of his soul, taking refuge in the Lord and constantly remembering him at all times, everything proves to be simple and within easy reach. In the *Gītā* the Lord Himself declares that He is easy to attain through exclusive thought alone:—

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।
तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः ॥

(VIII. 14)

"Arjuna, whosoever always and constantly thinks of Me with undivided mind, to that Yogī always absorbed in Me I am easily attainable."

The idea is that when a loving devotee of the Lord, who continues to think with utmost love and reverence without break of the divine essence or of the Lord's Name, virtues, glory and pastimes, can no longer bear his separation from the Lord, separation from him becomes unbearable to the Lord; and when the Lord Himself longs to meet His devotee there is no room left for any difficulty in meeting Him. And to him who is firm in his faith that through constant and daily thought of the Lord it is easy to meet Him, constant and daily remembrance of the Lord too is easy through His grace.

And in this endeavour the spontaneous help of the Lord is unquestionably there. Nevertheless if, taking refuge in Him, we seek His help in quickening the pace of our endeavour and developing supreme reverence and exclusive love for the Lord, such a longing is as good as desirelessness.

Therefore, taking refuge in the Lord, one should diligently strive till the end of one's life to accelerate one's pace in Sādhanā (spiritual endeavour).

Gita Press, Gorakhpur

Our Publications, Kalyan and Kalyana-Kalpataru available at :

Gorakhpur—273005	Gita Press—P.O. Gita Press ✆ **(0551) 2334721; Fax 2336997**
	website:www.gitapress.org / e-mail:booksales@gitapress.org
Delhi— 110006	2609, Nai Sarak ✆ **(011) 23269678; Fax 23259140**
Kolkata— 700007	Gobind Bhavan-Karyalaya, 151, Mahatma Gandhi Road
	e-mail : gobindbhawan@gitapress.org, ✆ **(033) 22686894; Fax 22680251**
Mumbai— 400002	282, Samaldas Gandhi Marg (Princess Street)
	Near Marine Lines Station ✆ **(022) 22030717**
Kanpur— 208001	24/55, Birhana Road ✆ **(0512) 2352351; Fax 2352351**
Patna— 800004	Ashok Rajpath, Opposite Women's Hospital ✆ **(0612) 2300325**
Ranchi— 834001	Cart Sarai Road, Upper Bazar ✆ **(0651) 2210685**
Surat— 395001	Vaibhav Apartment, Opposite Nutan Niwas, Bhatar Road
	e-mail : suratdukan@gitapress.org ✆ **(0261) 2237362, 2238065**
Indore— 452001	G-5, Shree Vardhan, 4 R.N.T. Marg ✆ **(0731) 2526516, 2511977**
Jalgaon— 425001	7, Bhim Singh Market Near Railway Station ✆ **(0257) 2226393**
Hyderabad —500096	41, 4-4-1; Dilshad Plaza, Sultan Bazar ✆ **(040) 24758311**
Nagpur— 440002	Shriji Kripa Complex, 851, New Etawari Road ✆ **(0712) 2734354**
Cuttack— 753009	Bhartiya Towers, Badam Badi ✆ **(0671) 2335481**
Raipur— 492009	Mittal Complex, Ganjpara
	Telghani Chowk ✆ **(0771) 4034430**
Varanasi— 221001	59/9, Nichibag ✆ **(0542) 2413551**
Haridwar—249401	Sabjimandi, Motibazar ✆ **(01334) 222657**
Rishikesh— 249304	Gita Bhawan, P.O.-Swargashram
	e-mail : gitabhawan@gitapress.org ✆ **(0135) 2430122, 2432792**
Coimbatore — 641018	Gita Press Mansion, 8/1M, Racecourse ✆ **(0422) 3202521**
Bangalore — 560027	#15, 4th 'E' Cross, K.S. Garden,
	Lalbagh Road ✆ **(080) 22955190**

Station-Stalls— **Delhi** (Platform No. 12); **New Delhi** (No. 8-9); **Hazarat Nizamuddin** [Delhi] (No. 4-5); **Kota** [Rajasthan] (No. 1); **Bikaner** (No. 1); **Gorakhpur** (No. 1); **Kanpur** (No. 1); **Lucknow** [N.E. Railway]; **Varanasi** (No. 4-5); **Mughal Sarai** (No. 3-4); **Haridwar** (No. 1); **Patna** (Main Entrance); **Ranchi** (No. 1); **Dhanbad** (No. 2-3); **Muzaffarpur** (No. 1); **Samastipur** (No. 2); **Howrah** (No. 5 & 18 Both); **Sealdah Main** (No. 8); **Asansol** (No. 5); **Cuttack** (No. 1); **Bhubaneshwar** (No. 1); **Rourkela** (Books-Trolley); **Rajgangpur** (Books-Trolley); **Aurangabad** [Maharashtra] (No. 1); **Secunderabad** [A.P.] (No.1); **Guwahati** (No. 1); **Khadagpur** (No.1-2); **Raipur** [Chhattisgarh] (No. 1); **Bangalore** (No.1) and **I.S.B.T. (Delhi)**

Retail Counters

Churu— 331001	Rishikul-Brahmacharyashram, Purani Sarak; ✆ **(01562) 252674**
Rishikesh —249192	Muni Ki Reti
Tirupati — 517504	Shop No. 56, T.T.D. Mini Shopping Complex, Tirumalai Hills

ISBN 81-293-0045-1

Code 522 ▲